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ABSTRACT

Edinburgh Working Papers is intended to show a yearly cross-section of current work in Edinburgh's Department of Applied Linguistics and to elicit reactions and criticism. Papers in this compilation include the following: "Asymmetric Resetting of the Non-Empty Topic Parameter by Chinese-Speaking Learners of English"; "The Sociolinguistic Status of English in Malta"; "Interlanguage Phonology: The Perceptual Development of Durational Contrasts by English-Speaking Learners of Japanese"; "Participant Reference in Greek Personal Experience Narratives"; "Reading, Culture, and Cognition"; "Cluster Analysis and the Interlanguage Lexicon"; "Interactional Listening Tasks: A Comparative Study of Strategy and Practice Teaching Approaches"; "Lesson Beginnings"; "Where True Power Lies: Modality as an Indication of Power in Two Institutionalised Domains of Language Use"; "Tense, Aspect and the Busconductor Hines--The Literary Function of Non-Standard Language in the Fiction of James Kelman"; "A Pragmatics of Verbal Irony in Literary Discourse: An Example from Drama"; and "An Investigation into Learners' Reactions to Learner Training for Self-Access Listening." (JL)

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Preface

EWPAL provides an annual update on some of the work currently being carried out in applied linguistics by students and staff at the University of Edinburgh. The work of four authors from the Department of Applied Linguistics (DAL) and of two from the Institute for Applied Language Studies (IALS) is featured in **EWPAL 3** for the first time, and their contributions are particularly welcome.

I think it is also worth noting in passing that seven of the ten DAL postgraduate students featured in this issue come from outside the UK - a proportion that roughly reflects the overall balance within the 40-strong body of M.Litt. and Ph.D. students in the Department. This international dimension extends to the topics covered; the research reported here includes studies on speakers or learners of languages spoken in China, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Kenya and Malta, as well as on English as a Foreign Language and what, quaintly, we still call 'Modern Languages' in Britain.

The Contents list reveals four possible broad groupings: sociolinguistics (papers by Camilleri, Gill and Owusu-Ansah); stylistics (Georgakopoulou, Rodger and S'hiri); interlanguage (Yuan, Enamoto and Hill); and classroom-based research (Luk; McGrath, Davies and Mulphin; Wardrop and Anderson). That thematic breadth should, we hope, ensure that every reader will find something of interest. The aim of **EWPAL** is not simply to bring Edinburgh researchers' work to a wider audience but also to elicit comments and constructive criticism from readers; if you would like to raise points with any of the contributors, you will find contact addresses at the end of this volume.

I would like to acknowledge the willing help of the members of the Editorial Board - Cathy Benson, Alan Davies, Eric Glendinning, Neil Jones, Joan Maclean, Liam Rodger, Sonia S'hiri and Antonella Sorace - who made time over their Christmas and New Year vacation to read and comment on the manuscripts submitted for **EWPAL 3**.

Thanks also go to my IALS colleagues Elaine Rogerson, John McEwan and Margaret MacPherson for their efficient and invaluable assistance in turning contributors' 'final' versions into these published papers. The *final* final form of **EWPAL 3** also owes much to the expertise of Ray Harris and his colleagues at the Reprographics Department of the University of Edinburgh.

Tony Lynch
Editor

April 1992

ASYMMETRIC RESETTING OF THE NON-EMPTY TOPIC PARAMETER BY CHINESE-SPEAKING LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Boping Yuan (DAL)

Abstract

This paper reports on a pilot study examining how Chinese-speaking learners of English reset the non-empty-topic [-Te] parameter. Whereas Chinese allows empty topics coindexed with variables in both subject and object positions, English does not. With respect to this particular parameter, Chinese can be said to form a superset of English as the grammar of the former is more general than the latter. The results obtained in this study suggest that the Subset Principle does not apply in L2 acquisition and the L2 learners transfer the L1 setting to the L2 grammar. However, the transfer is asymmetric and selective; even advanced subjects have more difficulty in detecting the ungrammaticality of the variable coindexed with the empty topic in the object position than in the subject position. It is argued that this asymmetry is the effect of UG in the learners' IL grammars in combination with their parsing ability.

1. Introduction

Within generative theory, Universal Grammar (UG) has been assumed to be a language acquisition device which all human beings are innately endowed with (Chomsky, 1981, 1986a)[1]. Human languages are extremely complex and subtle, and it is argued that L1 learners discover such complexity by means of innate linguistic structure, i.e. UG. UG contains principles and parameters; the former are true for all languages where applicable and the latter vary from language to language. Under the theory of parametric variation, the L1 learner can begin with one setting and switch to another when his initial hypothesis is disconfirmed by the primary data. Within learnability theory, it has been suggested (cf. Wexler and Manzini 1987) that the L1 learner does not start off with an overgeneralized grammar that would require negative evidence for disconfirmation; instead, he always chooses the narrower of two grammars compatible with a set of observed data and changes his grammar only when disconfirming evidence in the primary input data refutes his initial hypothesis. That is, language acquisition proceeds on the basis of positive evidence alone. This is known as the 'Subset Principle' (Berwick 1985; Wexler and Manzini 1987).

Assuming that UG constrains L1 acquisition and that the language learner sets the values of parameters on the basis of positive evidence, we may ask whether UG and the Subset Principle can be related to L2 language acquisition. In this paper I will present results of a pilot study investigating the resetting of the non-empty topic parameter by Chinese-speaking learners of English. While there is evidence of UG constrains in L2 acquisition in this study, the results suggest that the Subset Principle does not apply to L2 acquisition and L2 learners transfer the L1 setting to the L2 grammar. However, the

transfer is asymmetric and selective, and does not involve all the properties subsumed by this particular parameter.

2. The empty-/non-empty topic parameter and the Subset Principle

Both Chinese and English grammars generate sentences with topics. But whereas Chinese allows base-generated optics, non-gap topics and empty topics, English does not:

A. Base-generated topics (BGT)

(1) a. zhe wei xiansheng$_1$ wo bu jide yiqian wo zai nar jian-guo (e_1)
this CL gentleman I not remember before I at where meet EXP OBJ
*b. This gentleman$_1$ I can't remember where I have met (e_1) before.

(2) a. na zuo fangzi$_1$ wo bu zhidao ta dasuan shenmo shihou mai (e_1)
that CL house I not know he intend what time sell OBJ
*b. That house$_1$ I don't know when he is going to sell (e_1)

B. Non-gap topics (NGT)

(3) a. ta jia li de ren, wo zhi jian-guo ta mama.
her family in GEN people I only meet EXP her mother.
*b. Members of her family, I have only met her mother.

C. Empty topics coindexed with the variables in the subject positions (ETS)

(4) a. zhe ge shiyan$_1$ yijing kaishi (e_1) wo xiangxin (e_1) hui chenggong.
this CL experiment already start TOP I believe SUB will succeed.
*b. This experiment$_1$ has already started> (e_1) I believe (e_1) will succeed.

(5) a. wo jian-guo tade nu-pengyou$_1$. (e_1) (e_1) zhang de hen piaoliang
I meet EXP his girl-friend TOP SUB look very beautiful.
*b. I have met his girl-friend$_1$. (e_1) (e_1) Looks very beautiful.

D. Empty topics coindexed with the variables in the object position (ETO)

(6) a. ta kan-guo zhe bu dianying$_1$, keshi (e_1) wo mei kan-guo (e_1).
he see EXP this CL film but TOP I not see EXP SUB
*b. He has seen this film$_1$, but (e_1) I haven't seen (e_1).

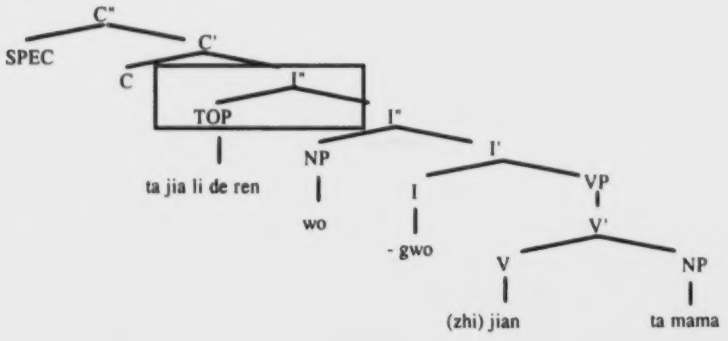
(7) a. yinwei zhe ge wenti$_1$ bu zhongyao, suoyi (e_1) women bu zhuenbei zai hui shang taolun (e_1)
as this CL question not important so TOP we not prepare at meeting on discuss OBJ
*b. As this question$_1$ is not important, (e_1) we are not going to discuss (e_1) at the meeting.

As is well known, violations of the Subjacency Principle in English give rise to ungrammatical strings, as in (1b) and (2b) (i.e. violations of the *wh*-island constraint). The Subjacency Principle seems not to apply to Chinese, as in (1a) and (2a). Huang

(1984a, 1984b, 1987) argues that the Subjacency Principle does apply to Chinese; as Chinese is a topic-prominent language (Li and Thompson, 1975), the topic position of a sentence must be available at D-structure. 'Therefore, for each variable bound to a topic, there are two possible ways to derive it: it may be created by movement as a wh-trace, or it may start out as an EC at D-structure and later be coindexed with the topic (and become a variable)' (Huang, 1984a:561). That is, the ECs in (1a) and (2a) are not created by movement (because they are blocked in nonsubjacent environments, i.e. the wh-islands) but must have been base-generated as a 'null resumptive pronoun' (cf. Riemsdijk and Williams, 1986: 300-301) and become a variable by definition at the point where it is coindexed with its A'-binder.

What is the principle that allows the presence of an empty topic in Chinese, as in (4a), (5a), (6a) and (7a) but rules it out in English, as in (4b), (5b), (6b) and (7b)? According to Huang (1984b), a fundamental solution to the problem of properly formulating the empty topic parameter is that INFL is a proper governor in Chinese but not in English. What is dominated by INFL in Chinese is true lexical categories; this makes it possible for INFL in Chinese to properly govern the subject as well as the topic, and enables Chinese to have empty topics as well as variable subjects. As INFL in English is not a proper governor, the subject variables in (4b) and (5b) are in violation of the ECP (Chomsky, 1986b). Similarly, the fact that English does not allow empty topics also follows from the same account, for the topic is obviously not properly governed by INFL if the subject is not properly governed by it.

Huang's idea is further developed by Cole (1987), who suggests that there is a fundamental difference in the basic structures of Chinese and English. In Chinese the topic is a basic unit of a sentence, which is an adjunct being adjoined to IP (= I") (cf. Cole, 1987). As IP is the maximal projection of INFL, INFL properly governs the subject position. It is natural to expect in this case that the topic position is also properly governed. This has the consequence that the topic as well as the subject may each be an EC satisfying the ECP (Chomsky, 1986b), 'a situation that directly gives rise to the existence of empty topics' (Huang, 1984b:99). As INFL in Chinese is a proper governor governing the topic as well as the subject, the topic can be directly Case-marked, receiving nominal case like the subject (cf. Cole, 1987). This account also enables us to explain the sentence with a non-gap topic in Chinese like (3a), in which the topic is base-generated and Case-marked by INFL. (The following diagram reflects the sentence structure of (3a).)



According to Berwick's formulation of the Subset Principle, 'the learner should hypothesize languages in such a way that positive evidence can refute an incorrect guess' (Berwick, 1985:37). In the case when language data are compatible with two or more grammars thast generate languages in a subset/superset relation to each other, that is, when one of the languages is properly contained within the other with respect to a particular aspect of grammar, and if the learner mistakenly selects the more general grammar, the incorrect guess will result in overgeneralization that cannot be refuted on the basis of positive evidence. The Subset Principle predicts that the learner will initially hypothesize the less general subset grammar and switch to the more general superset grammar only when specific positive evidence exists to refute his initial hypothesis.

As Chinese has a topic adjunct in its D-structure and INFL in Chinese is a proper governor governing both the subject and the topic, it allows sentences with non-gap topics, base-generated topics and empty topics coindexed with both the variables in the subject position and in the object position, as well as sentences without non-gap topics, base-generated topics and empty topics. English, on the other hand, only allows the latter, i.e. sentences without non-gap topics, base-generated topics and empty topics. Thus, with respect to this particular aspect, the grammar of English is less general than the grammar of Chinese and is properly contained within it.

Assuming that the Subset Principle operates in L1 acquisition, we may then ask whether or not it operates in L2 acquisition. If it did operate in L2 acquisition, Chinese learners of English would assume the less general subset grammar, that is, sentences without non-gap topics, base-generated topics and empty topics. This would be the correct assumption. An there would be no evidence which can cause a change to a more general superset grammar. In that case, Chinese learners of English should not accept sentences with non-gap topics, base-generated topics and empty topics.

3. The experiment

3.1 Subjects

Subjects consisted of 20 adult native speakers of Chinese and 7 adult native speakers of English to serve as controls. The native Chinese speakers were research students at the University of Edinburgh or Heriot-Watt University and, in some cases, their wives. The subjects were divided into four different proficiency groups according to their performance on a long-established cloze test constructed by Davies (1965) (Group 1 = beginners, Group 2 = early intermediate, Group 3 = late intermediate and Group 4 = advanced). The controls were in Group 5; they were residents studying or working in Edinburgh. Non of them had any knowledge of Chinese.

In a one-way ANOVA, a significant difference is found between the mean scores of the five groups in the cloze test ($F = 33.51$, $p < 0.0000$). As the results of the Tukey test show (see Table 1), there are significant differences between the mean scores of Group 1 and the other four groups and between the mean scores of Group 2 and Groups 4 and 5.

Table 1: Tukey Test of the cloze test: pair-wise comparisons between mean scores of the five groups in the cloze test.

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
Group 2	- 16.32**			
Group 3	- 22.50**	- 6.18		
Group 4	- 28.55**	- 12.23**	- 6.05	
Group 5	- 29.58**	- 13.26**	- 7.08	- 1.03

**$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

3.2 Method

The subjects were asked to do an acceptability judgement task, which was designed to test the resetting of [-Te] parameter. For each experimental sentence, there was a corresponding control sentence, which was identical to the experimental sentence in every way except for the linguistic feature being investigated, so that any difference in the judgements between the experimental sentence and the control sentence by the subject could be attributed to the linguistic feature under investigation.

What is presented here are the results of the subjects' judgements on 66 sentences (33 control sentences and 33 experimental sentences) out of 118 sentences included in the experiment. Examples of the experimental sentences of the four sentence types (i.e. BGT, ETS, NGT and ETO (see Section 2)) can be seen in Sentences (1b), (2b), (3b), (4b), (5b), (6b) and (7b) in Section 2.

3.3 Results

For the acceptability judgements on each of the three types of sentences, i.e. BGT, ETS and ETO (see Section 2), a two-way ANOVA was performed; the control sentences and the experimental sentences were two independent variables with the five proficiency groups forming five levels within each of the two independent variables. The dependent variables were the scores obtained by the subjects in judging the control and the experimental sentences. The results for the control sentences with BGT, ETS and ETO show that there is no significant difference between the means in any of the five groups, suggesting that the four groups of Chinese learners of English, like the native speakers, had mastered the sentence structures being tested. (See Figure 1.)

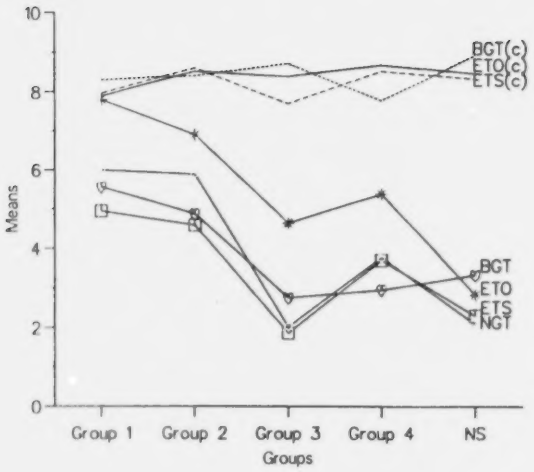


Figure 1: The mean scores by the five groups in judging the control sentences (c) and the experimental sentences of BGT, ETS, ETO and NGT.

Table 2: Tukey Test of BGT: pair-wise comparisons of mean scores between the groups in judging the experimental sentences.

	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
Group 1	0.68	2.81*	2.60*	2.22
Group 2		2.13	1.92	1.54
Group 3			-0.21	-0.58
Group 4				-0.38

** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

In their judgements of the experimental sentences with BGT, Group 1 appears to be at an indeterminate stage (the mean = 5.556) and there is no significant difference in their judgements between the means of the control sentences and the means of the experimental sentences (the difference between the means = -2.74). The Tukey test also shows that Group 1's judgement of the experimental sentences of BGT is significantly

different from Groups 3 and 4. No significant difference is found between other groups. (See Table 2.)

In judging the experimental sentences with ETS, no significant difference is found between any of the five groups although Group 1 still appears to be at an indeterminate stage (the mean = 4.942) and their judgements of the experimental sentences are not significantly different from the control sentences (the difference between the means = -3.02). (See Table 3.)

Table 3: Tukey Test of ETS: pair-wise comparisons of mean scores between the groups in judging the experimental sentences.

	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
Group 1	0.36	3.08	1.24	2.64
Group 2		2.73	0.88	2.28
Group 3			-1.84	-0.45
Group 4				1.45

**$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

With ETO, the results of the judgements of the experimental sentences present a different picture. As the results of the Tukey test indicate (see Table 4), all the learner groups, except Group 3, made significantly different judgements from the native speakers group (i.e. Group 5), and even group 4, the advanced learners, who showed no significant difference from Group 5 in the cloze test, fail to reject these sentences accurately. What is more, there is almost no difference in Group 1's judgement between the control sentences and the experimental sentences (the difference between the means = -0.08). It seems clear that the subjects in Group 1 transferred their L1 grammar into the L2, assuming that the sentence with the empty topic coindexed with the variable in the object position was grammatical in English.

Table 4: Tukey Test of ETO: pair-wise comparisons of the means between the groups in judging the experimental sentences.

	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
Group 1	0.91	3.90**	2.48**	4.96**
Group 2		2.99**	1.57*	4.05**
Group 3			-1.41	1.06
Group 4				2.48**

**$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

Pair-wise comparisons were also made between the means of the three types of sentences, i.e. BGT, ETS, and ETO, within each of the five groups. Again, no significant difference is found between the means of the control sentences of the three types in any of the five groups (see Figure 2). In the judgements on the experimental sentences, no significant difference is found between the means of BGT and ETS in any of the five groups. However, except in Group 3 and the native group, and except between ETO and ETS in Group 4, we find significant difference between ETO and the other two types, i.e. BGT and ETS, in pair-wise comparisons in all the groups (see Figure 2 and Table 5). This indicates that almost all learners including the advanced learners had more difficulty in detecting the ungrammaticality of the ETO sentence than the other two types.

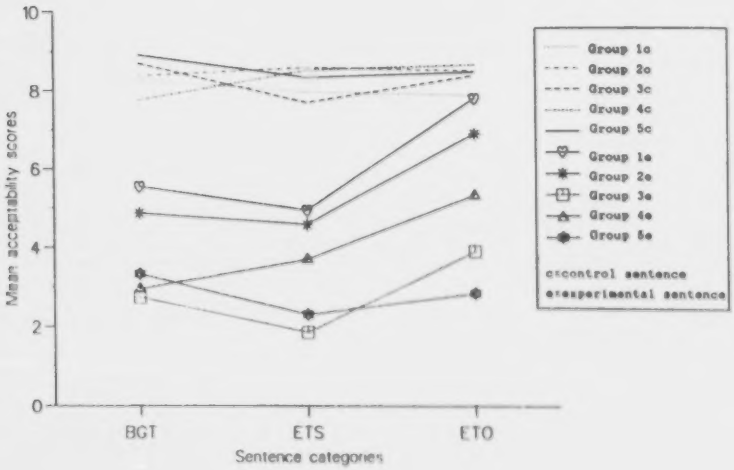


Figure 2: Mean scores for BGT, ETS and ETO within each of the five groups.

Table 5: Tukey Test: pair-wise comparisons of mean scores between the three types of experimental sentences in each of the five groups.

Group 1

	ETS	ETO
BGT	0.61	-2.25*
ETS		-2.86**

Group 2

	ETS	ETO
BGT	0.29	-2.02**
ETS		-2.31**

Group 3

	ETS	ETO
BGT	0.89	-1.16
ETS		-2.05

Group 4

	ETS	ETO
BGT	-0.75	-2.36**
ETS		-1.62

Group 5

	ETS	ETO
BGT	1.03	0.49
ETS		-0.54

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

To test the existence of the topic adjunct in the learner's IL grammars and to use the NGT sentence to predict the BGT and ETS sentences, two simple linear regressions were carried out with the NGT sentence as an independent variable and the BGT and ETS sentences as dependent variables respectively. The underlying hypothesis of this analysis is that the status of the topic adjunct parameter is a condition on the acceptability of the BGT and ETS sentences. If the topic adjunct parameter in the IL grammars is reset to the negative value, that is, the topic adjunct has been unset, we would expect that the BGT and ETS sentences would be unacceptable to the learner. As the results in Tables 6 and 7 show, the t-values in both predictions are significant. As the sample here is very small, we have to treat the results with caution. However, the results do imply that the score obtained in the judgement on the NGT sentence is at least useful as a predictor of the scores in the judgements on the BGT and ETS sentences.

Table 6: Simple linear regression of BGT using NGT as a predictor.

The regression equation is:	DF	R-SQ	T-ratio
BGT = 1.05 + 0.664 NGT	18	41.5%	3.57*

**p<0.01, *<0.05

Table 7: Simple linear regression of ETS using NGT as a predictor.

The regression equation is:	DF	R-SQ	T-ratio
ETS = 0.155 + 0.811 NGT	18	63.3%	5.57**

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

4. Discussion

As we have seen, the results of the experiment suggest that Chinese learners of English initially assume English to be like Chinese, transferring the value of their L1 parameter into L2. This is particularly true in the judgements of the ETO sentences, where the learners in Group 1 almost totally accept the experimental sentences. The results here are inconsistent with the Subset Principle; if the Subset Principle had applied, all the sentences with base-generated topics and empty topics would have been totally rejected. The opposite is found here.

However, the transfer revealed by our experiment is asymmetric; almost all learners including advanced learners had more difficulty in detecting the ungrammaticality of the ETO sentences than the BGT and ETS sentences. This asymmetry cannot be attributed to the availability of positive evidence (i.e. misleading evidence) since English has a stronger constraint on null objects than on null subjects. The following are some example sentences from Schmerling (1973:582), which exhibit some missing subject pronouns in colloquial English.

(8) Seems you can't do that in Texas.

(9) Guess I should be going.

(10) Ever been to Chicago?

But even in colloquial English no null objects are allowed.

It could be argued, on the other hand, that the processing demands raised by the variables in the subject position and the object position are different as the former often forms a 'gap' at the surface level with both sides bounded by other constituents of the sentence, as is shown in (4b), and the latter often appears at the end of the sentence without any bounding constituent on the right side except the full stop, as in (6b). The unavailability of a 'complete gap' in the object position could be argued to cause more difficulty for the learner in locating the gap, and this would explain their failure to detect the ungrammaticality of the ETO sentence. However, the test also contains some ETO sentences which do form 'gaps' with both sides bounded by other constituents of the sentences, as in (7b). And these sentences caused as much difficulty as the sentences like (6b). Furthermore, the null subject also exists as an 'incomplete gap' without any bounding constituent on the left side, as in (5b), and this type of sentence does not cause more difficulty than the sentence with a 'complete gap' in the subject position.

The asymmetry could also be attributed to the differing recoverability of the contents of the null subject and the null object. As is shown in (11), there could be three potential competing arguments for the null subject; and the learner could reject the sentence because of the confusion caused by the three competing arguments. However, a similar possible confusion can also be found in the sentence with the null object, as in (12) and many subjects accepted the sentence in spite of this possible confusion.

(11)* We have planted some trees and flowers in the garden. Are growing quite well.

(12)* She has seen the film, but I haven't seen yet.

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We suggest that the asymmetry in the resetting on non-empty-topic parameter by the Chinese learners of English is the effect of UG in the learner's IL grammar in combination with the learner's parsing ability. As aspect markers in English can be frequently seen as bound morphemes in the input, such as affix-hoppings in negative or interrogative sentences, the learner 'knows', at a quite early stage, that INFL in English does not have lexical status as it does in Chinese. The lack of lexical status of INFL makes it impossible for the topic adjunct to exist in the learners' IL grammars since if INFL is not lexical, the topic adjunct will not be properly governed and Case-marked. Consequently, sentences with non-gap topics, base-generated topics and empty topics are rejected as ungrammatical. Because of the establishment of the functional status of INFL in these learners' IL grammars of English, they had to unset the topic adjunct. And as a result, the learners in Groups 2, 3 and 4 were able to detect, like the native speakers, the ungrammaticality of the sentences with base-generated topics and empty topics coindexed with the variables in the subject position. This is also supported by the results obtained from the simple linear regression, in which the acceptance of the non-gap-topic sentence is used as a predictor for the acceptance of the sentences with the base-generated topic and the empty topic coindexed with the variable in the subject position. It would be a violation of UG if the non-gap topic were rejected but the base-generated topics and empty topics were accepted.

However, if they had unset the topic adjunct, why were most learners, including the advanced learners, unable to detect accurately the ungrammaticality of the sentence with the empty topic coindexed with the variable in the object position? We believe that because of their limited parsing ability, they have to adopt a 'bottom-up' strategy to parse the input data. As a result, they can parse the input data only through a very narrow 'window' (Zobl, 1988). As the variable in the object position is properly governed by the verb locally, the learners simply judge the sentence as acceptable on the basis of the data observed locally through the narrow window. As the window expands, more data can be parsed. Gradually, the ungrammaticality of the coindexation of the variable in the object position with the empty topic is discovered and the sentence rejected.

For example, when a beginning learner comes across a sentence like (13), the narrow 'window' he has only allows him to analyze the few words exposed within the scope of the 'window'; if the words exposed within the scope of the 'window' are "going to repair [e]", the learner may accept the variable in object position on the basis of it being properly governed by the verb "repair". At this stage, the learner may not be aware that the variable is blocked in a nonsubjacent environment (i.e. a wh-island) because the wh-word "when" falls outside the scope of the 'window'. Only when the scope of the 'window' is wide enough to cover the variable in object position, the wh-word "when" and perhaps also the empty topic, will the learner be able to discover the ungrammaticality of the sentences, i.e. the violation of the Subjacency Principle.

(13) He wants to repair this car, but [e] I don't know when he is going to repair [e].

5. Conclusion

As the number of the subjects involved in the pilot study is very small, any conclusion we reach here must be tentative. However, the results obtained from the study do indicate an asymmetry in the resetting of the non-empty-topic parameter; Chinese learners of English are able to reject the base-generated topic and the empty topic coindexed with the variable in the subject position at a much earlier stage than the empty topic coindexed with the variable in the object position. The reason, we believe, is that as the former are adjacent to the non-proper governor, INFL, learners do not have much difficulty in detecting the ungrammaticality even when their parsing 'windows' are still 'narrow'; while the latter, as the variable is properly governed locally and is distant from the empty topic coindexed with it, cannot be rejected until the learner's parsing window is wide enough to cover the whole ungrammatical coindexation. The results from the study do not support the prediction of the Subset Principle that once learners have hypothesized a more general grammar, it will be impossible to refute the wrong hypothesis on the basis of positive evidence. Our study suggests that there can be other forms of disconfirming evidence, such as the bound morphemes (i.e. aspect and tense markers) under the node of INFL in our study, which can cause the resetting of the correct parameter.

Note:

1. A short version of this paper was presented by Antonella Sorace and Boping Yuan at the International Conference on SLA in the Chinese Context, Hong Kong, 1991. I am indebted to Antonella Sorace and Dan Robertson for their valuable comments on an earlier version of the present paper.

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THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC STATUS OF ENGLISH IN MALTA

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Abstract

This paper provides a sociolinguistic description of English language use in Malta at present, in terms of who speaks what language, where and when. Some observations on English language contact with Maltese are made. Finally a brief discussion is taken up as to whether and to what extent it would be appropriate to consider Maltese English as a new institutionalized variety of English.

1. Historical background

English was originally introduced in Malta[1] as a result of British colonization. Malta became a British colony in 1800; it gained independence in 1964 and became a Republic in 1974, but remains a member of the British Commonwealth to the present day.

Throughout the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth, however, Italian was the dominant language of government, education and the Roman Catholic Church. It was spoken by the upper classes of Maltese society while Maltese was used by the lower classes and was referred to as 'the language of the kitchen'. Towards the end of the 1800s English was enforced as an entry requirement to the civil service and so an increasing number of Maltese people started to learn English. At the same time, feelings of nationalism came to the fore and gave rise to a politico-linguistic battle known as 'The Language Question' between Italian, English and Maltese. Frendo (1975:22) describes the situation as

> a unique example of a case in which trilingualism became a battle-ground in the successful quest for a national identity. Maltese nationalism rotated in time on this triple paradox: the championing of Italian as a non-Maltese national language; the active promotion of the British Imperial power as a means of expunging Italian; and the gradual emergence of Maltese as a national tongue and as the prime expression of anti-British sentiments.
>
> (Frendo 1975:22)

In 1934 Maltese replaced Italian as the official language of Malta alongside English. The Maltese orthography was standardized and grammars, dictionaries, books on usage and a Maltese literature flourished. English, on the other hand, became the language of education. Italian continued to hold a presence mainly because of the various Italian television channels received in Malta (see Section 2.2 a) and due to the geographical proximity to, and the cultural and religious affinity with, Italy.

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2. Use of Maltese and English: Domains

The Maltese population is described as 'bilingual' (see Azzopardi, 1981:2; Kontzi 1983:351; Cremona, 1990:163). Generally speaking, Maltese individuals have a working knowledge of Maltese and English. This is necessary in a country where both languages share roles at the national, societal and personal levels.

In what follows, the use of Maltese and English in the domains of administration, media, work, education and home is described.

2.1 Administration

a) Law Courts

In the Law Courts, Maltese has replaced Italian as the 'binding' language and is always used for court proceedings. It is interesting to note though, that the Maltese legal register and the professional language of the lawyers, has been observed to be more influenced by Italian than by English as a result of their law studies at the University.

b) Parliament

Maltese is used in spoken interaction in Parliament while the written reports are kept in both Maltese and English. As many of the politicians belong to the legal profession, the Maltese political register is also rather more influenced by Italian than by English.

c) Curia

In 1936 Italian was declared the official language of the Church (Aquilina 1971:172). Following Vatican Council II, Maltese became the language of the Church and is used in all Church activities. Furthermore various types of text (leaflets, books, audio-tapes etc.) in Maltese are issued regularly by various religious organisations and individuals.

2.2 Media

a) Television

There is one local television station which broadcasts news, programmes on local culture and shows of entertainment (e.g. quizzes, sport, games) in Maltese. Films and documentaries in English are imported from both the UK and the USA During weekdays, a direct programme from the BBC is transmitted for about an hour in the morning, and the American channel CNN is on air for about eight hours during the day. In addition, the Maltese people have access to more than fifteen Italian television channels including the three national Italian stations (RAI).

b) Cinema

All the films shown in Maltese cinemas are British or American, or have English sub-titles.

c) Theatre

Generally speaking, theatre productions are in Maltese and produced locally. However, plays in English are occasionally produced.

d) Newspapers and Magazines

There are a few daily and weekly newspapers in Maltese and one major local daily newspaper in English. The most popular magazines are those imported from the U.K. and Italy.

2.3 Work

Maltese is the spoken language at practically all places of work ranging from factories to offices. However, this does not exclude the possible use of a Mixed Maltese English variety (see Section 3). English is generally used for writing purposes. In government, a significant amount of departmental correspondence takes place in English. In the last four years the Administrative Secretary wrote twice to all Heads of Departments reminding them that they ought to use Maltese. Both of his circulars were written in English! However, Maltese is becoming more frequent in, for example, forms that members of the general public need to fill in like tax and passport forms. Banks use both Maltese and English in their correspondence. English naturally plays a crucial role in the tourist industry where about an eighth of the population earn their living.

2.4 Education

At the University of Malta, English was declared the only official language of the University in 1947, while Maltese was declared official alongside English in 1971 (Aquilina 1971;172). In some private schools, as documented by Navarro and Grech (1984), until very recently students were only allowed to speak English and the use of Maltese was punishable. Nowadays, throughout the education system both Maltese and English are used. It has been observed that normally within any one lesson both languages are used and mixed in complex ways. For example, it is frequently the case that Maltese (mixed in different ways with English) is used as a spoken medium while English is used for writing purposes (more details in Camilleri, 1991b).

2.5 Home

Four types of families can be identified on the basis of their use of Maltese and English at home (see Figure 1).

FAMILY TYPE	Languages acquired (in chronological order)
A	1. Dialect; 2. Standard Maltese; 3. English
B	1. Standard Maltese; 2. English
C	1. Standard Maltese and English
D	1. English; 2. Standard Maltese

Figure 1: Languages acquired in different families.

a) Family Type A: (1) a dialect of Maltese is acquired as a first language by the children because it is the first language of the parents and is spoken widely in the neighbourhood; (2) Standard Maltese is acquired later mainly through explicit teaching by the parents and formal teaching at school; and (3) English is also acquired formally at school (for a sociolinguistic study on this context see Camilleri, 1987).

b) Family type B: (1) Standard Maltese is the native tongue of both parents and the first language of the children; (2) English is acquired through formal education.

c) Family type C: (1) both Maltese and English are used interchangeably by both parents and children. This has given rise to a Mixed Maltese and English variety (cf. Borg, 1986), and in the circumstances one could talk of a Mixed Maltese English variety acquired as a first language.

The following is a short extract from a telephone conversation recorded in a family where speaker A is the mother in this type of family and B belongs to family type A:

A to B: *hello*...(continues in Maltese)

B to A: *hello*...(in Maltese)

B speaks to daughter (in English): *Go and get it. Let me see.*

B speaks to daughter/to herself (in Maltese): *Din suppost tak a nara*
(is this what he should have given you let me see)

B continues speaking to A in Maltese...

d) Family Type D: (1) English is spoken by one or both of the parents and is acquired as an L1 by the children; (2) Maltese is later acquired formally at school and through socialization with Maltese speakers. Probably[2] there are only a few families of this type where both parents are Maltese but speak English to their children. However, there is a number of families where only one parent is Maltese and the other parent is a foreigner and usually the language of the family in these circumstances is English. Usually foreign residents whose L1 is not English resort to English as a means of communication with the local community and do not attempt to learn Maltese which is perceived as a very 'difficult' language to speak and to write, and which they do not really feel it necessary to acquire.

3. Range of language varieties used

Language use in Malta is best described in terms of a range of speech varieties ranging from the dialects of Maltese, through Standard Maltese, Mixed Maltese and English to Maltese English at the other end.

The use of English by the Maltese people was originally referred to as "Maltese English" by Broughton (1976) and set forth by him as a realistic goal to aim for in the teaching of English in Malta. The same term was later employed by Borg (1980). Borg (1986:96) says that while,

> the influence of the first language shows up in the English speech of most Maltese speakers...Maltese English however cannot be considered a homogeneous and discrete variety: rather it is realized by a continuum of speech styles characterised at one end by a minimum of interference from Maltese and at the other by an ever increasing influence of the mother tongue on all linguistic levels. The latter, naturally tend to be socially stigmatized, while the former are held in considerable esteem.
>
> (Borg 1986:96)

At this point it is useful to draw a distinction between the two varieties referred to as "Maltese English" and "Mixed Maltese English". "Maltese English" could be defined as *the English spoken in Malta by bilingual speakers of Maltese and English*. Maltese English is influenced by Maltese on most linguistic levels, namely phonology, grammar, semantics and discourse, but not on the lexical level i.e. there are no Maltese lexical items within a stretch of Maltese English speech. In fact this is the cut- off point between the two varieties because Mixed Maltese English consists of lexical items from both languages. Mixed Maltese English consists of various types of code mixing and switching (see Camilleri,1991b).

The variety initially referred to as "Mixed Maltese English" by Borg (1980) is a functional variety, as observed in use as a medium of instruction in schools. This means that the Maltese bilingual utilizes elements from the two languages in a way that is most efficient in the circumstances. This is a very natural and automatic process (see Gumperz, 1982).

Furthermore, this mixed variety not only seems to be acquired as a mother tongue by a number of children (as in Family Type C), but also seems to be developing as a social dialect in its own right. It has been observed to be particularly flourishing among young people of a tertiary level of education especially as they interact on campus (Sixth Form and University), and outside the campus with friends of the same educational background.

Gibbons (1979) reports on a similar situation in Hong Kong where he says, there is a new generation of children of English language educated parents, who are growing up speaking a mixture of English and Cantonese, which he calls *U-gay-wa*. He says that this variety, which has also resulted from the contact of two languages within a single group, shows the emergence of partial autonomy. He refers to the process of language mixing as it occurs in Hong Kong as 'koinisation' rather than pidginisation and creolisation (after Hymes 1971:78-9). The extent to which the term 'koinisation' could be applied to Mixed Maltese English has still to be examined.

Bentahila and Davies (1983:303) report on a particular variety of code- switching used by Moroccans who are bilingual in Moroccan Arabic and French and say that the use of this mixture, involving very frequent code- switching, could in fact be considered a separate language variety, which Moroccan bilinguals use most typically in casual conversations where all the participants are equally bilingual.

3.1 The influence of the L1

While the linguistic influence of Maltese on English has been described elsewhere

(Delceppo, 1986; Calleja, 1987; Navarro and Grech, 1984), the statement about L1 influence has psycholinguistic implications. For example, is Maltese always the base language (or L1) for all speakers of English in Malta? Are there differences between speakers of Maltese English depending on their home language background as outlined above? If yes, what are these differences? Further empirical investigation is required in this area but some tentative answers are presented here as to who the (native) speaker of Maltese English is.

In answer to this question, the following suggestions are offered:

(i) those speakers born and brought up in Malta to Maltese parents who acquired English after they had acquired a dialect or the Standard Variety of Maltese (Family types A and B);

(ii) those speakers born and brought up in Malta to Maltese parents who acquired both Maltese and English as L1 (Family type C);

(iii) those speakers born and brought up in Malta to Maltese parents whose L1 was Maltese (or both Maltese and English). These people who as a result acquire English as an L1, are still exposed to the English of people with Maltese or Maltese and English mixed, as L1 (as in Family type D).

From the above, it seems that in all three cases Maltese is likely to operate as the base language in their cognitive linguistic organisation. In the case of (i) and (ii), a variety of Maltese has obviously been acquired as a mother-tongue and this will directly affect the acquisition of the English language later on. For type (iii) speakers, Maltese still operates as a base language although in a less direct manner. This is so for two reasons. First of all, because they have acquired an English variety from speakers for whom it was a second language and thus influenced by Maltese, and secondly because their English is acquired in the specific sociolinguistic context of Malta where the variety of English spoken is practically always influenced by Maltese.

The influence of Maltese on the English spoken in Malta could be observed in the speech of practically all speakers. It is readily apparent on the phonetic level, while the influence of English on Maltese is mainly lexical and is observable in some registers more than in others. More research on crosslinguistic influence between Maltese and English is necessary.

3.2 Stigmatization

Different groups of speakers of Maltese and English have different attitudes towards language use in Malta. The following are some examples:

1. Speakers of Maltese as L1 (as in Family types A and B) stigmatize speakers with Maltese and English or English as L1 (as in Family types C and D) as the latter are perceived to be snobs;

2. Maltese speakers of English stigmatize speakers of Maltese, who are seen as less educated and as belonging to a lower social class.

While people normally perceive themselves as speaking either one or the other of the two

languages, it has been observed by Borg (1980) and Camilleri (1991a and 1991b) that what in fact happens is that all groups of speakers mix the two languages continuously, although presumably not everyone, and not always, mixes them in the same way or to the same extent.

4. Is Maltese English a New English?

In this section, Maltese English is discussed in terms of whether, and to what extent it could be described as a new institutionalized variety of English, as for example, Indian English has.

According to Platt et al. (1984) and Kachru (1986) there are certain features that are common to (and necessary for?) the new Englishes to be considered institutionalized. These are summarized below and their applicability to the Maltese situation is examined.

(i) *The new varieties have developed through the education system.*

This is true for English in Malta to a large extent. However, the education system is not the only means of English language acquisition in Malta. Maltese children and people in general are continuously in contact with native and non-native speakers of English through the tourist industry, and indirectly through the media.

(ii) *English is taught as a subject and used as a medium of instruction in schools.*

In Malta, English is taught as a subject from the very beginning of schooling. Knowledge of English is essential for the Maltese student and for Maltese people in general because books in Maltese are very limited in all subjects, including subjects like Maltese History. Therefore students have to resort to books in English for the acquisition of knowledge.

English is also used as a medium of instruction, and one of the arguments normally brought forward in favour of its use as medium, is that it helps students be more proficient in English. However, one has to be wary of generalizations because very often

Maltese is used alongside English, and is mixed with it in most lessons (see Camilleri, 1991b).

(iii) *Primary importance is given to written sources.*

This is also true for English language instruction, and use of English in general throughout the island.

(iv) *It has local functions in administration, government and the media.*

As outlined in Section 2.2 above, English has a very small role to play in parliament and general government administration, especially as a spoken medium, while it competes with Italian in the media.

(v) *It is used for interethnic communication.*

This does not apply to Malta since the Maltese are an ethnically and culturally homogeneous community.

(vi) *It is culture-bound and has become localized.*

English as it is spoken in Malta has become localized to a certain extent. It has become culture bound mainly when it is influenced by and mixed with Maltese. As Kontzi (1983) shows, even students who seem to use a lot more English at school, are exposed to Maltese within society at large, and they do use it to communicate with neighbours, and to read the local newspapers and to watch the local television channel. However, written English is much closer to its British model.

The question of the use of English in Malta does not have the same relevance to the question of nationalism as it does in some Asian and African countries. The Maltese population in general does not feel the need to speak a different variety from British English in order to distance itself from the colonial days. The Maltese language seems to fulfil all the nationalist needs for the Maltese people and English is mainly perceived as the language of education and a necessary tool for international communication. There is no controversy as to which model of English should be presented in schools - the British model is taken for granted (as presented in books published in Britain and as it is spoken by the Maltese teachers).

It is very important to note at this point, that Maltese English in the perception of its speakers is not a different variety from Standard British English. For example I was told by a headmaster of a private primary school in Malta, that when he tried to explain to parents at a meeting that their English differed from the English spoken in Britain they were very surprised and found it hard to accept. However, this does not mean that they think they speak 'native' British English, but that their English rather than being a separate variety common to all Maltese people, is an individual manifestation of a less than perfect imitation of the model. I have been told by a university lecturer of English in Malta for example, that she has heard people, mainly of the younger generation, apologize for their English which they feel is not good enough. Thus, there seems to be a growing awareness of diversity from British English but this is perceived by its Maltese speakers as a manifestation of interlanguage and not of a new variety of English.

It might be appropriate to point out that a number of schools for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language are flourishing in Malta at the moment. A good number of European and North African people come to Malta for EFL courses given by Maltese teachers. There is, therefore, the understanding that the type of English delivered by Maltese teachers is acceptable at international level.

5. Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the above discussion.

1. The difference between written and spoken English must be stressed because while written English in Malta is rather close to British English[3], spoken Maltese English is not always so.

2. When talking about spoken Maltese English we are excluding the use of a Mixed Maltese English variety which is clearly different in terms of social and linguistic characteristics.

3. Spoken Maltese English is mainly used locally for two purposes; (a) for

international communication; and (b) in formal contexts where the topic is normally educational, scientific, technical or professional in some way.

4. Two groups of speakers can also be identified. Maltese people who use English for international communication (3a above), are in the majority and their English generally shows signs of interlanguage phenomena (see Ellis, 1986;47).

The other smaller group of speakers of Maltese English who use it for academic purposes (3b above), are those who probably perceive their English as identical to British English because they had the time and the opportunity to develop this proficiency through many years of study and practice in English, very often in a native environment.

However, although two main uses and two main groups of speakers of Maltese English have been identified, it would probably be more realistic to describe Maltese English in terms of a continuum which ranges from near- nativeness to lesser proficiency by people who are either still learning the language at school or through social interaction, or who have become fossilized at some stage.

In conclusion then, it seems necessary to distinguish between the description of Maltese English on the linguistic, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic levels. From a descriptive point of view, it seems that there is enough evidence to distinguish the English spoken in Malta from the English spoken elsewhere. In sociolinguistic terms English is a complementary variety to Maltese rather than a second language; and it is not perceived by its speakers as a variety in its own right. In psycholinguistic terms Maltese English is, for a large majority of the population influenced by a base language - Maltese.

Notes

1. The Republic of Malta consists of two main inhabited islands with a total area of 246sq. km. and a population of 345,636.

2. There are no official data on languages spoken in Malta. There were no questions on language in any of the national censuses.

3. It has been my recent experience in translating into Maltese from both an English text produced in a Maltese newspaper and another text from a British newspaper, that it was much easier to translate into Maltese from the Maltese newspaper in English than it was from the British newspaper. Could this be taken as evidence of a Maltese linguistic substratum in the written English text?

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INTERLANGUAGE PHONOLOGY: THE PERCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF DURATIONAL CONTRASTS BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING LEARNERS OF JAPANESE

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Abstract

This paper reports upon a small-scale pilot study for further investigation into the perceptual development in the acquisition of durational contrasts by different levels of adult English-speakers of Japanese. Four kinds of naturally spoken word-tokens were edited by a synthesizer to generate word-stimuli varying the duration of a certain consonant/vowel (originally contained in each word-token) along a durational continuum. These synthetic word-stimuli were randomised and presented to both native speakers and English- speaking learners of Japanese, in four forced-choice word identification tasks. The overall identification data in all tasks, indicated that the L2 learners' levels of language experience/proficiency correlated positively with the closeness of their perceptual categories of the durational continua, to the perceptual categorisation of the native speaker group. This seems to imply that the L2 learners' initial perceptual categories or perceptual targets, may be possibly modified/developed towards the 'categorical perception' model shown by the native speakers in the course of adult L2 acquisition.

1. A brief review of studies of interlanguage phonology

In the history of SLA research, a great deal of attention has been paid to grammatical domains of language acquisition (morphology/syntax), yet until the last decade, the acquisition of L2 phonology remained relatively neglected. In the comparatively short time span of study in this area, much research on IL phonology has been conducted, seemingly taking two major theoretical approaches to IL phonology: one perspective emphasises the pervasiveness of (L1) phonological transfer and the other (in one way or another) takes the influence of phonological universals and markedness hierarchy into account in developing an IL phonological theory/model.

With regard to the former perspective, the contrastive analysis hypothesis (cf. Lado 1957) seems to represent the most accessible theory to many language teachers, providing them with relatively accessible and straightforward principles for both predicting and explaining learning problems in the classroom. In the domain of phonology, contrastive phonology is conducted, based on comparison of the sound systems of two languages, i.e. by establishing measures of structural divergence/convergence between specific aspects of the two sound systems. Such measures serve to determine which features of the L1 are to be transferred to the L2, by taking a directional approach from one to the other. In this view, the learner's phonological errors are attributed to the negative transfer of the L1 phonological features to the L2.

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It has to be stressed that there seems to be more support for the view that L1 experience does (in some way) affect L2 acquisition (i.e. the transfer position) in the area of phonology than in the other domains of acquisition. Thus, in many studies of IL phonology, there is considerable, but not total, support for specific predictions, such as from contrastive phonology, despite deep theoretical and methodological problems.

Likewise, apparently supporting the view that L1 linguistic experience affects L2 phonological acquisition, Flege (1980, 1981, 1987) hypothesised a cognitive mechanism, 'equivalence classification', as a major cause of difficulties in acquiring L2 sounds. The equivalence classification hypothesis proposes that the L2 learner, having established his L1 phonological system, fails to develop separate 'perceptual targets' for the L2 sounds with phonetically 'similar' counterparts in the L1. As a result of this, the learner develops an inaccurate perceptual target, which is a 'merged system' of the L1 and L2 phonetic properties.

On the other hand, with regard to the latter perspective, Major (1987) proposes the ontogeny model, focussing on the 'interaction' between interference (i.e. L1 negative transfer) and developmental processes/factors (i.e. common phenomena between L1 and L2 acquisition), although the distinction between the two (factors) remains undetermined in some cases. Eckman (1977), considering the influence of the markedness hierarchy, proposed the markedness differential hypothesis (MDH) by incorporating the definition of typological markedness concept into the contrastive analysis hypothesis, in order to predict the degree and directionality of difficulty in L2 acquisition. However, Fellbaum (1986) further proposed a revised version of the MDH, by incorporating into the MDH the markedness not only of phonemes but also of allophones, because the original MDH prediction was limited to the acquisition of phonemes, (as is contrastive phonological analysis).

With these two major theoretical perspectives influencing the formation of IL phonological models/theories, studies of IL phonology have investigated to what extent phonological transfer and phonological universals operate upon the formation of an IL phonology. However, as such studies as a whole have produced neither a sequential nor an interrelated set of theoretical and empirical outcomes, the research in this area, seems as yet to be in its infancy in both theoretical and empirical terms.

The results presented and the line of reasoning followed in this paper may seem to be aligned more closely with the L1 transfer position, using certain facts/properties in the L1 phonological system to account for the IL phonology. However, it is not my intention to address the question of whether or not these two (seemingly opposed) theoretical polarities (i.e. transfer vs. phonological universals) are empirically plausible, although there has been considerable debate about this, particularly in other domains of acquisition (e.g. Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982).

2. Phonetic background for the acquisition of durational contrasts

In certain languages, segmental duration serves as the primary cue for the distinction between certain classes of phonemes. For example, long vowels contrast with short ones in Danish, Arabic and Korean, and long consonants contrast with short ones in Italian (Ladefoged 1982). Likewise, in Japanese all the vowels and some consonants can be discriminated from their geminate/long counterparts, primarily by their durational

differences, and Japanese is a language which utilises duration to distinguish meanings, i.e. short-long variations in length are used phonemically to distinguish meanings. In the distinctive feature theoretical framework (Chomsky and Halle 1968), the duration of such sounds can be regarded as one of the distinctive features, which can be opposed to all the other features.

By contrast, in English, it is said that the vowel before the voiced consonant /d/ is longer than the same vowel before the voiceless consonant /t/ with other properties being equal, an example of this being "bad"-"bat". Ladefoged (1982) states that, in most varieties of English, vowel lengths are allophonic. With regard to consonant length in English, long consonants exist only across word-boundary or morpheme-boundary as in "white tie" and "unknown" respectively, whereas in Japanese, they occur within a morpheme boundary, as in Italian.

In sum, the phonetic background for the acquisition of Japanese durational contrasts is that, whilst in English duration is not distinctive nor phonemic, it is in Japanese. This presents examples of particular research interest to L2 phonological acquisition research. In fact, in the literature on the acquisition of the Japanese phonological system, it is commonly stated that both perceiving and producing durational contrasts presents great difficulties to L2 learners of Japanese. My informal classroom observation also suggests that this is the case for English-speaking learners of Japanese. The following are the examples of such durationally-contrasted pairs of words in Japanese, to be investigated in the present study:

[iken] vs. [ikken]	'opinion'	vs.	'one house'
[niši] vs. [nišši]	'west'	vs.	'journal'
[sama] vs. [samma]	'Mr/Ms'	vs.	'mackerel/pike-like fish'
[kado] vs. [kaado]	'corner'	vs.	'card'

3. Perception vs. production of L2 sounds

By those adopting the transfer position outlined earlier, it has been proposed that the phonetic ability of L2 learners may be affected by their own L1s. More specifically, L2 learners have difficulty in both perceiving and producing sounds, (1) which do not exist in their L1s, or (2) between which distinction does not exist in their L1s. As the latter case applies to the acquisitional context in the present study, it can be proposed that both perceiving and producing durational contrasts is difficult for English-speakers, given that durational distinction does not exist in English.

In relation to the perception and production of L2 sounds, a theoretical proposition which provides an important research insight into the present study is the equivalence classification hypothesis (Flege 1980, 1981, 1987). This hypothesis is innovative in the sense that it sheds light on the role of perception, by identifying and differentiating two dimensions in the acquisition of L2 sounds, i.e. perception and production, rather than relating production solely to the acquisition of L2 sounds.

The hypothesis proposes that establishing inaccurate 'perceptual targets' or 'mental representation' affects the learner's production ability, which may result in his foreign accent (Flege and Hillenbrand 1984). Thus, this theoretical proposition seems to be based upon the assumption that perceptual ability precedes production ability. On this point, however, previous studies (both in the fields of L2 phonology and

phonetics/phonology) do not directly address the directionality of the cause and effect relationship between perception and production, nor do they provide empirical evidence for (whatever kind of) alignment between perception and production.

The results from a number of studies (Flege 1984, 1987; Flege and Eefting 1986; Flege and Hillenbrand 1984) support the above hypothesis, indicating that, as a result of the operation of equivalence classification in perception, L2 learners approximate the sounds that are acoustically/phonetically 'similar' (e.g. differences in VOT values)[1] in the L1 and L2, and often produce somewhat intermediate sounds that are found neither in L1 nor in L2. On the other hand, it has also been shown that L2 learners may succeed in establishing totally accurate perceptual targets for the 'new' L2 sounds that have no direct L1 counterparts.

For instance, by investigating the production data of American English speaking learners of French, Flege and Hillenbrand (1984) present empirical evidence that English-speakers produce French /t/ with longer English-like VOT values, i.e. (somewhat) intermediate values of two segmental phonetic features in the L1 and L2, because there is a merged system of the VOT properties of the French /t/ (with its short-lag VOT values) and the English /t/ (with its long-lag VOT values). Similarly, the study by Flege (1987) also shows that English-speakers of French approximated the vowel formant values[2] of the French /y/, much more closely to those obtained from French monolingual speakers, than the formant values of the French /u/; the French /y/ is a 'new' phone with no direct counterpart in English, whilst the French /u/ is a 'similar' one which is produced with (substantially) higher F2 values (the frequency of the second formant) than its English counterpart.

Thus, the above studies largely support the proposition that observed approximation in production of 'similar' L2 sounds, results from the establishment of inaccurate perceptual targets. However, as regards the perception data to empirically verify such an establishment of inaccurate perceptual targets, there have been a very small number of studies which have rigorously investigated L2 perceptual data in the study of L2 phonology. Likewise, in the area of phonetics/phonology, it seems also characteristic that, whilst a huge literature on production data exists, there has been considerably less research attention given to perceptual experiments.

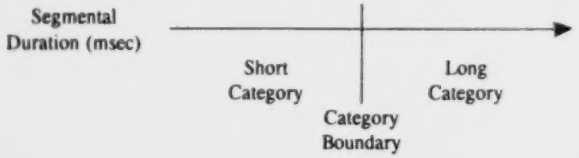
The present study, by collecting the perception data, is designed to investigate the relationship of the L1 linguistic, i.e. perceptual, experience as well as the relationship of different levels of L2 proficiency/language experience to the perception of durationally-contrasted L2 sounds. The goal of the research is to investigate the nature of 'perceptual targets' for durational contrasts, which the L2 learners (it is hypothesised) establish, possess and may possibly develop, at the different levels of proficiency/language experience in the L2. In the present study, such 'perceptual targets' were specifically referred to as 'perceptual categories' of durational contrasts. Thus, this study adopted the methodology of 'categorical perception' research, which enables us to quantify different perceptual categories by using the measures of perceptual discrimination tests, and to examine how categorical such perceptual category-assignments are, at different levels of language experience/proficiency.

4. Categorical perception

Categorical perception (CP) refers to the experience of discontinuity as a series of stimuli from a physical continuum cross a category boundary, together with the perceptual absence of (clear) changes within a category. A good example of this is our perception of colours (Harnad 1987): we only perceive qualitative changes, e.g. from red-orange-yellow-green, etc., although there are gradual quantitative changes in their wavelengths across the spectrum of visible colours.

> Categorical perception is said to occur if the subject cannot discriminate speech sounds any better than she can identify them within different phonological categories. Under these conditions, equal increments along a phonetically relevant articulatory continuum (with acoustic consequences) are not discriminated unless the increment crosses the boundary between phonetic categories.
>
> (MacKain et al.:1981:371)

Since the 1960's, CP research has been largely developed in the speech domain, with most research concerned with the role of phonetic categories, i.e. the phonetic segments/phonemes, in a native-speaker perceiver's perceptual processing (Repp 1984). Illustrated below is an example of possible category boundary locations (hypothetically) possessed by native speakers of Japanese along a durational continuum:



Cross-linguistic CP research has been conducted to investigate the potential role of linguistic experience in the perception of phonological categories by two groups of monolingual native speakers of two different languages (e.g. Abramson and Lisker 1973). Such research provided the evidence that the ability to discriminate is largely determined by language experience. In other words, lack of experience of a given contrast should result in a poorly-determined perceptual boundary, which separates the two members of that contrast. In this respect, CP research provides important theoretical and empirical basis for the present study. It can be hypothesised that, for the L2 learner of a particular L1 that does not make use of particular speech sounds as a phonological contrast, his perception of those sounds is affected. This hypothesis can be attested by comparing the CPs of phonetic contrasts by L2 learners and the native speakers of that language, in L2 phonological acquisition research.

However, the overall amount of research investigating the CPs of L2 learners at different levels of proficiency/language experience has been very limited, with most recent studies concentrating on the discrimination between /r/ and /l/ by Japanese learners of English, utilising either synthesised or natural speech, or both in their discrimination tests (e.g. Miyawaki, et al. 1975; Mochizuki 1981; MacKain et al. 1981). The results from MacKain et al. (1981) have replicated Miyawaki et al's (1975), indicating that the native speaker group perceived a synthetic /r/-/l/ continuum categorically, whilst the Japanese subjects did not. Furthermore, MacKain et al. (1981)

provided data to show that the experienced Japanese group perceived the continuum 'almost categorically', which was noticeably similar to the native speaker control group, whereas near-chance performance in their discrimination tasks was shown by the 'not-experienced' group.

Thus, based on the findings and research methods from previous CP research, the present research investigates to what extent the L2 learner's CP is different from/consistent with native speakers of Japanese, and how it develops in the adult L2 acquisition process, by utilising varying segmental durations along synthetic continua.

5. Method

5.1 Subjects

A forced-choice word-identification test was conducted with native speakers of Japanese (control group) and three levels of adult native speakers of English, participating in a (residential) six-week intensive Japanese course. The subjects were grouped on the basis of a language experience questionnaire. None of them had hearing disabilities.

The Elementary Group (EG) consisted of 6 learners with classroom instruction of an average 5.5 hours x 5 days x 6 weeks, combined with daily self-study. None of them had had Japanese instruction before attending the course. The Intermediate Group (IG) consisted of 6 learners who had first received Japanese instruction during the previous summer. None of them had any experience of living in Japan. The Near-native Group (NNG) consisted of 2 English-speakers of Japanese at a very advanced level with substantial experience of using Japanese in Japan. The Native Speaker Group (NSG) consisted of 5 native speakers of Japanese. This adds up to 4 groups and 19 subjects in all.

5.2 Materials and stimuli

Four kinds of natural speech word-tokens were digitised on a speech synthesizer (MASSCOMP MC5500 using the Real Time UNIX system and digital-to-analog converter) through a microphone with a sampling frequency of 8 kHz and with an accuracy of 20,000 samples/second. Following this, the word-tokens, /iken/ and /nisi/ were synthetically lengthened by inserting the duration of silence (i.e. the stop gap) preceding the plosion and the duration of fricative noise interval of /s/, respectively. In this way, 10 synthetic word-stimuli were generated along the durational continua in 50-msec increments. One ranging from /iken/ to /ikken/ and the other from /niši/ to /niššši/. On the other hand, the word-tokens, /samma/ and /kaado/ were shortened by reducing the duration of the nasal murmur of /m/ and the vowel duration of /a/ towards the durations of /m/ and /a/ of /sama/ and /kado/, respectively along the continua in 25-msec increments. In this way 10 word-stimuli of each continuum were generated.

Then, each word-stimulus was recorded singly on a cassette tape recorder (NEAL Model 302), with inter-stimulus intervals of 2.0 sec and inter-block intervals of 10 sec, which were inserted after each of 10 separate randomisations of 10 stimuli. 10 stimuli along the /iken/-/ikken/ continuum were repeated and randomised in Task A, and /niši/-/niššši/, /sama/-/samma/, /kado/-/kaado/ followed this principle in Tasks B, C, D, respectively.

Thus, the identification test consisted of 4 tasks for each durational continuum. One task consisted of 10 blocks and each block presented a different order of the same 10 stimuli. In total, 100 (10 X 10) stimuli in one task, and 400 stimuli (10 x 10 x 4) altogether in the test, were presented to the subjects.

5.3 Procedures

The recorded stimuli were presented through headphones, at a comfortable listening level using a language laboratory system (ASC Electric Model AS4M)[3]. Prior to testing, the subjects were instructed orally in their L1 and the non-natives were also given a sheet of all instructions typed in English. A block of stimuli was presented before each task, for the purpose of familiarisation, so that the subjects were informed about the short-long contrast for the particular pair of words to be heard in each task. Such a practice block consisted of all the duplicates of the second blocks of each task. The subjects were asked to indicate their duration judgments by marking 'S' (for a short word) or 'L' (for a long word) on an answer sheet. They were asked to answer immediately after listening to each stimulus during the inter-stimulus interval of 2.0 sec, and to choose the closer word in the case of uncertainty, even when this means guessing. It took approximately 45 minutes to complete all the tasks in the order of A, B, C, and D.

6. Results and discussion

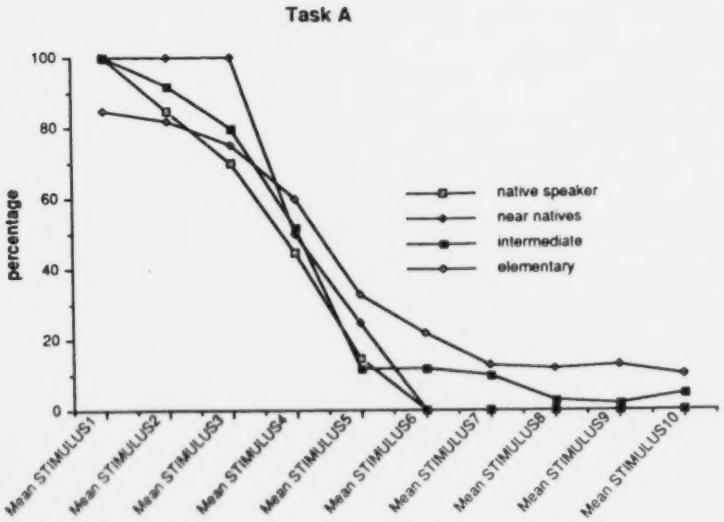
The results are shown in Table 1, indicating the "mean percent responses for short" for each stimulus 1-10, in each task. The four line-graphs also illustrate each table, with the vertical axis of the graph indicating mean percent responses for the identification of a short member of a pair and the horizontal axis stimulus number from 1 to 10.

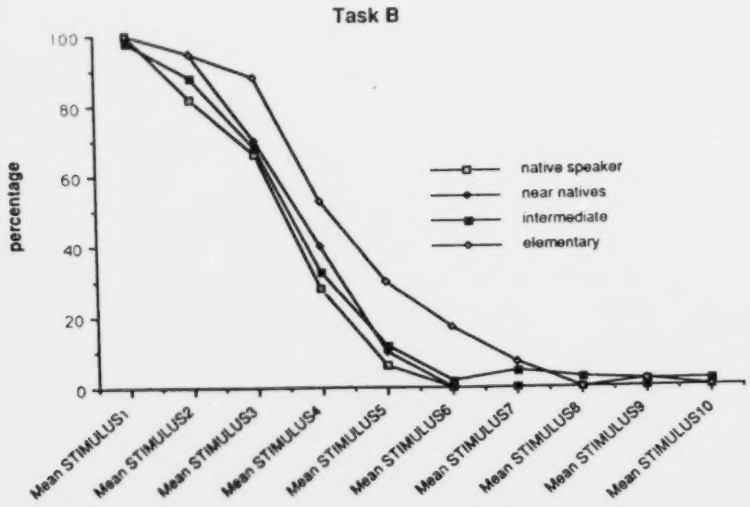
The results, particularly in Tasks C and D, indicate that the NSG perceived the synthetic continua most categorically, showing 'categorical perception' with a sharp category boundary near stimulus 5, dividing the durational continuum into two short-long categories, and both end-point stimuli 1 and 10 were consistently identified 100 % as short and long, respectively. On the other hand, the overall results by the IG and EG did not support the existence of a clear category boundary, still having a small percentage of responses for "short" towards the endpoint of stimulus 10 in all tasks. Furthermore, similar to the findings in MacKain et al.'s study (1981) on a synthetic /r/-/l/ continuum, the overall results of the L2 learners show that the most-experienced group (NNG) perceived the continuum almost 'categorically', which was remarkably similar to the NSG, whereas the identification curves demonstrated by the IG and EG were far less close to the NSG's. Such intra-group data indicates that the learners' levels of language experience/proficiency correlated positively with the closeness of their perceptual categories to that of the native group.

These results may be interpreted as meaning that the NSG has clear perceptual targets/categories for each of the four durational continua, i.e. 'categorical perception' with a clear category boundary dividing the durational continuum into two short-long categories, whereas the L2 learners do not possess/have not yet established such a clear category boundary. This leads us to conclude that the L2 learners' initial perceptual targets/categories can be modified/developed towards the categorical-perception model shown by the native speakers in adult L2 acquisition.

Table 1: Mean percent responses for 'short' for stimuli 1-10

Task A	Native	Near-native	Intermediate	Elementary
1	100	100	100	85
2	85	100	92	82
3	70	100	80	75
4	45	50	52	60
5	15	25	12	33
6	0	0	12	22
7	0	0	10	13
8	0	0	3	12
9	0	0	2	13
10	0	0	5	10
Task B	**Native**	**Near-native**	**Intermediate**	**Elementary**
1	100	100	98	100
2	82	95	88	95
3	66	70	68	88
4	28	40	33	53
5	6	10	12	30
6	0	0	2	17
7	0	0	5	7
8	0	0	3	0
9	0	0	2	2
10	0	0	2	0
Task C	**Native**	**Near-native**	**Intermediate**	**Elementary**
1	100	100	100	98
2	100	100	100	100
3	90	90	87	100
4	25	65	78	77
5	2	30	43	52
6	0	5	32	35
7	0	5	10	3
8	0	0	10	3
9	0	0	0	2
10	0	0	0	0
Task D	**Native**	**Near-native**	**Intermediate**	**Elementary**
1	100	100	98	100
2	100	100	100	100
3	100	100	92	93
4	86	45	77	60
5	0	10	37	28
6	0	10	15	22
7	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	2	0
9	0	0	2	0
10	0	0	2	0


Task A
100
80
60
40
20
0
percentage
native speaker
near natives
intermediate
elementary
Mean STIMULUS1
Mean STIMULUS2
Mean STIMULUS3
Mean STIMULUS4
Mean STIMULUS5
Mean STIMULUS6
Mean STIMULUS7
Mean STIMULUS8
Mean STIMULUS9
Mean STIMULUS10


Task B
100
80
60
40
20
0
percentage
native speaker
near natives
intermediate
elementary
Mean STIMULUS1
Mean STIMULUS2
Mean STIMULUS3
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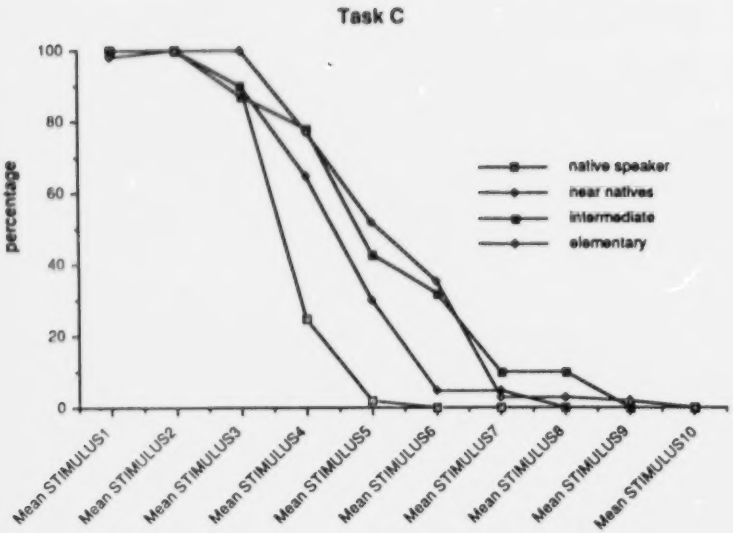
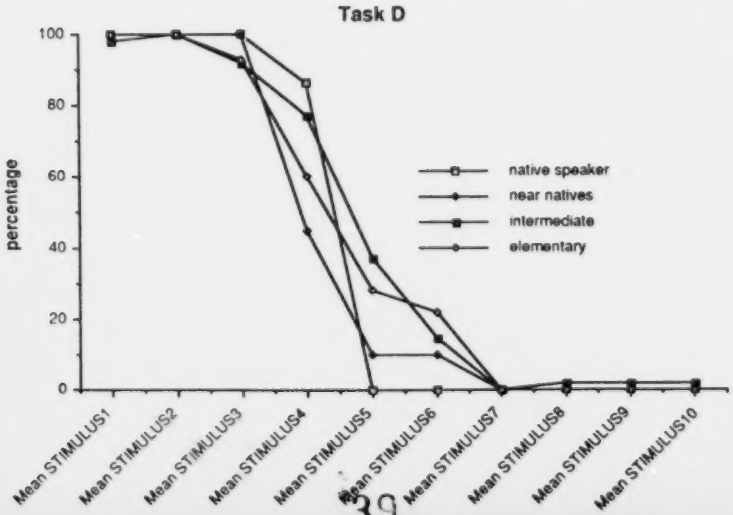
Mean STIMULUS7
Mean STIMULUS8
Mean STIMULUS9
Mean STIMULUS10


Task C
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
native speaker
near natives
intermediate
elementary
Mean STIMULUS1
Mean STIMULUS2
Mean STIMULUS3
Mean STIMULUS4
Mean STIMULUS5
Mean STIMULUS6
Mean STIMULUS7
Mean STIMULUS8
Mean STIMULUS9
Mean STIMULUS10


Task D
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
native speaker
near natives
intermediate
elementary
Mean STIMULUS1
Mean STIMULUS2
Mean STIMULUS3
Mean STIMULUS4
Mean STIMULUS5
Mean STIMULUS6
Mean STIMULUS7
Mean STIMULUS8
Mean STIMULUS9
Mean STIMULUS10

However, findings from such a small-scale study involving a single test are far from being generalisable. In terms of the reliability and validity of the test, there are several important methodological issues to be considered before undertaking further research. Individual identification data revealed considerable individual differences within a group. For instance, some subjects in the EG are noticeably more sensitive to the acoustic changes than some subjects in the IG, and so many more subjects need to be tested. With regard to generating synthetic stimuli, further improvement is required. For instance, the selection of pairs of words, the source of word-tokens, the method of shortening and lengthening of a token, the period of increments along a continuum, and the recording of stimuli, will be reexamined and further improved. As regards the presentation of the answer sheets, durationally-contrasted pairs of words will be presented in Japanese script for the NSG and in Roman script for the non-natives, instead of the letters 'S / L' (short/long).

Most importantly, the instructions on how to give responses, explained orally prior to the testing, caused unexpected confusion to two NSG subjects. As a result, the overall mean percent responses in the NSG fell below 100 percent for the shorter-end stimuli of 2-4 in Tasks A and B. This instruction problem may be one of the reasons why their identification curves, particularly in Tasks A and B, become less sharp than they could have been. However, the artificiality of the synthetic stimuli may have influenced the native speakers' perceptions in some way. Another kind of perceptual discrimination test (the AXB discrimination Test) will be conducted in tandem with the identification test, in order to back up such findings.

The overall shapes of the (shown) identification curves also differed amongst the stop, fricative, nasal and vowel continua. Data from previous CP research in the area of phonetics also provides different results between CPs of consonants and vowels. (Non-CP results for vowels are provided by Stevens et al. 1969). In the present study, feedback from the subjects suggested that Task D (for the vowel) proved to be the easiest for all the groups of subjects, whilst Tasks A and B (the stop and the fricative) were felt to be relatively difficult. In relation to this, the order and timing of the tasks will be reexamined and changes implemented.

The total time spent was said to be just about right for their concentration threshold. It was felt that inter-stimulus interval of 2.0 sec and inter-block interval of 10.0 sec were also about right for the subjects to give their responses. The presentation of each practice block proved to be crucial.

The general observation was that the NSG seemed more confident and decisive in giving responses, whereas the L2 learners seemed to be having to guess more often. It may be that the L2 learners perceived the duration of each word, by referring to the previous one they had just heard, whilst the NSG referred to their concept or meanings of the two short and long words, independent of the previous stimulus- duration they had just heard.

7. Conclusion

This article has reported the findings of an analysis of the perceptual discrimination data in the interlanguage phonology of adult English-speakers of Japanese from a perceptual acquisition perspective. The findings of this pilot study suggest that adult non-native speakers of Japanese are, at least, able to develop their perceptual target/category for the

durational continua, closely towards that of the native speakers of Japanese, with a positive correlation with language experience/proficiency in the L2. However, in order to increase both the validity and reliability of the discrimination test (discussed earlier), further perceptual experiments must be conducted to verify or falsify such findings.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all the members of staff and the students who participated in BAJS (the British Association of Japanese Studies) Summer Institute of Japanese (1991), for their cooperation in conducting the pilot study.

Notes

1. Voice onset time is referred to as the interval occurring between the beginning of the release of air pressure and the onset of regular vocal cord vibration in the articulation of stop consonants, such as /p/-/b/ and /t/-/d/.

2. There are three main formants characterising vowels, i.e. the first, second, and third formants. The vowel formant values correspond to varying frequencies (Hz) of the air in the vocal tract.

3. The testing was conducted in the language laboratory at the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Durham, with the subjects participating in the British Association of Japanese Studies (BAJS) Summer Institute of Japanese, 1991.

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PARTICIPANT REFERENCE IN GREEK PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVES

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Abstract

This paper, based on the analysis of forty oral and forty written personal experience narratives elicited from the same subjects for two different audiences, explores the shaping of participant reference with respect to considerations of audience and the effect of modality. The discussion first focuses on the impact of cognitive constraints on the referential patterning of the data and then turns to the discourse factors/functions that trigger nominal reference in the narratives at hand. Of these functions evaluation is particularly stressed for its role in the elicitation of explicit forms of reference. What this paper mainly shows is that the contextual parameters of audience and modality play a crucial role in the functioning of the factors discussed that underlie referential choices: these are modelled on the narrators' schemata about their intended audiences and are also affected by the change of modality.

1. Introduction

The discussion in this paper isolates one aspect of the complex phenomenon of referential patterning in discourse, namely that of participant tracking. The term covers the set of referential patterns and devices by which the characters of a text are introduced, re-identified and established in the "universe" of the discourse. The data on which the discussion is based comprises eighty personal experience narratives in Greek elicited from twenty subjects from a comparable social and educational background. Each subject of the experiment related four short stories with the same topic (an unpleasant first-hand experience), for two different audiences (adults and children) and in both oral and written form. Given the above description of the data, it follows that participant tracking in this case is looked at comparatively along the axes of modality (medium) and audience. In fact, unlike most previous comparative research on aspects of discourse anaphora, which is based on texts from different languages or genres (e.g. see Clancy 1980, papers in Grimes (ed.) 1978 and in Hinds (ed.) 1978), this paper investigates the factors that underlie referential choice as regards the narratives' participants from the perspective of the texts' mode of delivery and recipient design.

The definition of the term participant was a problematic enterprise to start with. Initially, it was designed to involve only the third-person human referents, but text analysis showed the need for the extension of the term to include animals or objects that are projected as animate (car and motorcycle are the only two instances of such objects in the data). The basic criterion that these categories should fulfill in order to be treated as participants was a functional role in the plot development which was tapped in the analysis by a number of elements (e.g. association with dynamic verbs, interaction with other characters, role in the narrative's causal relations etc).

2. Referential choice in the literature: The cognitive and discourse factors interface

Attempts in the literature to identify the factors underlying the choice between explicit (nominal reference) and inexplicit forms of reference (pronominal reference, elliptical reference or zero-anaphora) have led to the recognition of two major categories of factors: cognitive factors and discourse factors. The former category explains referential choice in terms of constraints that apply on both the addresser's and the addressee's cognitive abilities, whereas the latter comprises discourse structures and functions involved in the making up of a text's anaphoric patterning. In particular, an approach to reference based on cognitive factors would account for the choice of an explicit vs an inexplicit form of reference in terms of quantitative evidence as regards its distance to the last mention of the referent and the intervening referents (risk of ambiguity). Alternatively, looking for the discourse factors that affect reference would involve the qualitative study of macro-level devices (strategies) and functions of the discourse structure.

Different researchers have emphasised one or other category of factors. A typical example of emphasis on the cognitive considerations that surround any referential choice is Givon's work (1983: 17ff) which measures the impact of cognitive constraints on referential choice in terms of referential distance (distance between two mentions of a referent), persistence of a coreferential form in the subsequent context and ambiguity (presence of other entities which might be candidates for reference).

A series of works on discourse anaphora have tried to show that cognitive-oriented approaches to reference such as Givon's are inadequate because they 'assume that discourse is made up of an undifferentiated string of clauses which follow one another in time but do not form larger units that could perform communicative function in relation to one another' (Fox, 1987b: 158). Here one can cite the work of Hinds (1978), Grimes (1978), Clancy (1980) and Fox (1987a, 1987b) which use narratives as their data, and draw attention to the association between discourse factors and participant reference, because, as their data suggests, 'time and interference cannot account for all referential choices' (Clancy, 1980: 143). For instance, as Fox argues (1987), they cannot account for cases in which 'something like eleven clauses' separate the two mentions of a character and yet the second mention is done with a pronoun' (161), contrary to any predictions made about the role of distance.

Studies as the above propose the following discourse factors as responsible for the choice between explicit and inexplicit forms of reference: demarcation of discourse units (e.g. episodes/paragraphs), world-shifts or shifts from one mode of narration to another (e.g. from the on the-event-line to the off the event-line) and relations between the participants (mainly characters' plot centrality). In line with the above mentioned literature, the first thing which the close study of the sample at hand showed as regards referential choice in the narratives, is that it cannot be adequately dealt with in an approach relying only on cognitive factors. The neglect of the role of discourse factors in the forms of participant reference employed in the narratives would result in a limited and impoverished account of the rationale underlying the final anaphoric patterning of the texts. This paper supports the view that any instance of referential choice is the complex outcome of more than one interacting cognitive and discourse factors and that it should be treated as such.

3. Forms of reference in Greek

Before the discussion proceeds, a note has to be made about the options available in the Greek system of referring. Greek, being a pro-drop language, differs from languages like English which basically rely on nominal and pronominal reference, in that it employs ellipsis or zero-anaphora[1]. This happens because it is possible to delete the subject of a sentence altogether if its identity is recoverable from the context: e.g. "I Maria ihe idhi thimosi arketa. Etsi efighe" ("Maria had already become very angry. So (literally) left", not "she left", as it would be in English). Thus, subject pronominal reference is an intermediate form of reference in terms of explicitness, more explicit than ellipsis, which is the ordinary form of attenuated reference, and less explicit than full noun phrases (NPs). In terms of markedness, subject pronouns also stand midway along the markedness continuum: when ellipsis is expected or permitted, the choice of a pronoun is marked, but less marked than the choice of an NP. The system of referential forms in Greek also comprises clitics which function as the most attenuated form of reference in cases of object referents, with stressed pronouns and full NPs being the other two more explicit alternatives: e.g. "Tu ipa" (lit: him[clitic] I said), "Ipa s'afton" (I said to him: pronoun), "Ipa ston patera mu" (I said to my father: NP).

4. Referential choice in the data: An overview of cognitive constraints

To be able to "compute" the impact of cognitive constraints on referential choice in the sample, the analysis followed Clancy (1980), in that it tried to identify the effect of time and interference in the distribution of coreferential forms in the data on the basis of three measurements: i) the number of idea units[2] separating two mentions of the same referent, ii) the number of sentences separating the two mentions, and iii) the number of other referents intervening between the two referents. In these measurements number "0" indicates re-mention of the referent in the same idea unit or sentence, while number "1" indicates that the second mention of the referent takes place in the idea unit or sentence immediately following the one with the first mention: e.g.

> O babas mu pada ehi provlima me ta nosokomia/ ke the beni pote mesa [ellipsis for "o babas mu": 1(idea unit), 0(sentences), 0(referents)]/ ki ine i mama pu pada sinodhevi/ ke thimame oti kathotan ekso [ellipsis for "o babas mu": 2(idea units), 0(sentences), 1(referent)]... (My dad always has a problem with hospitals/ and never enters them [ellipsis for "my dad": 1(idea unit), 0(sentences), 0(referents)]/ and it's my mother who always escorts/ and I remember that [lit: was sitting] he was sitting outside [ellipsis for "my dad": 2(idea units), 0(sentences), 1(referent))
>
> (Virginia F., oral SA)

The first remark to be made about the frequency of the referential forms with respect to the three measures selected in the data is that inexplicit forms of reference present a higher concentration in "0" and "1" than explicit forms of reference do. Obviously, this is due to the greater constraints exercised upon them by the cognitive factors of time and interference. The evidence for this is that ellipsis, the most attenuated form of reference, normally occurs in all types of narratives and with striking regularity within the immediately following idea unit or same sentence as the last mention of the referent or

with no intervening referents (see Table 1a for the percentages of ellipsis in these positions).

Table 1a: Ellipsis

	a. idea units	b. sentences	c. referents
	1	0	0
OSsA	71	80	66
OSsC	76	76	78
WSsA	87	67	88
WSsC	88	66	81

Pronouns, being a less attenuated form of reference than ellipsis, tolerate more the lapse of idea units, sentences and referents: they are almost equally distributed between the positions 1 and 2-4 as regards the lapse of idea units; the great majority of them also occur either within the same sentence or after the passage of one sentence from the last mention of the referent and either with no intervening referents or after one referent (see Table 1b).

Table 1b: Pronouns

	a. idea units	b. sentences	c. referents
	1 : 2-4	0 : 1	0 : 1
OSsA	41 : 50	70 : 26	37 : 56
OSsC	51 : 40	67 : 29	46 : 48
WSsA	62 : 33	41 : 44	55 : 38
WSsC	67 : 25	56 : 44	48 : 50

NPs, being the most explicit referential form, are the ones on which the least cognitive constraints are exerted. This is why they normally occur after two-to-four idea units or one sentence after the last mention of the referent or with at least one intervening referent (see Table 1c).

Table 1c: Noun Phrases

	a. idea units	b. sentences	c. referents
	1: 2-4	1: 2-4	1
OSsA	11 : 31	39 : 35	32
OSsC	28 : 39	54 : 20	44
WSsA	21 : 37	48 : 34	42
WSsA	10 : 43	39 : 41	42

In terms of the functioning of cognitive factors in each modality, the general tendency for all forms of reference is to exhibit a concentration of greater percentages between the numbers "0" and "4" in written narratives than in oral ones. Put in another way, in comparison to oral narratives, more referential forms, both explicit and inexplicit, occur closer to their antecedents in written narratives. The implication of this distribution is that the influence of cognitive constraints is stronger in written modality than it is in oral modality. Therefore, this finding corroborates the standard view in the literature that written language is less tolerant of ambiguities than oral language and that it opts more for explicitness (Olson 1977), because of its "decontextualized" (Kay 1977) or

"detached" (Chafe 1982) nature (i.e. independence of external context, lack of paralanguage, absence of the addressee)[3].

The finding is also in accordance with what happens in the data in terms of the frequency of referential forms. Without going into the matter in detail here, it suffice to say that the oral narratives at hand present a greater percentage of inexplicit referential forms whereas written narratives rely more on explicit forms of reference. Thus, the data suggest that, unlike the view expressed by Mazzie (1987) that textual implicitness or explicitness as a result of referential choice is connected with other variables (e.g. content) than modality, explicitness in reference is definitely related to the medium. However, the results of the data analysis also demonstrate the need to take into account other determinants as well (in our case the intended audience), in order to provide an adequate explanation of the phenomenon. In fact, audience considerations and the sender-receiver relationship override the effect of modality in certain cases in the data. Specifically, written SsC (stories for children) at first glance act in an "irregular" way, as regards nominal reference: whereas oral SsC, as compared to oral SsA (stories for adults) exhibit a greater percentage of explicit reference and a greater proportion of NPs closer to their antecedents, presumably to facilitate the children's task of deciphering the referent, written SsC do not follow this pattern. Instead, they act in the opposite way in relation to their corresponding written SsC. They also do not manifest the stronger effect of written modality as compared to oral modality in eliciting more nominal reference in less distance from the last mention of a referent, as happens in the written SsA (see again Tables 1(a-b-c) for the above discussion).

This "unpredictable" behaviour, in addition to being an instance of audience accommodation overriding the modality effect, illustrates the inadequacy of cognitive factors in accounting for certain choices in the referential patterning. The same sort of "unpredictable" behaviour underlies the phenomenon of switch reference (a character is mentioned again in the narrative in subject position following an idea unit or sentence that has a different subject referent) in the data (no numbers are given here). This combined with the general qualitative analysis of the data led to an explanation of the phenomenon which inevitably takes discourse factors into account.

In particular, the whole question has to do with the discourse structure of demarcating units and the strategies employed in the data with respect to it. There are two general discourse strategies that shape participant reference within the same paragraph (for a discussion of the concept see section 5) in the narratives at hand. The first strategy favours strong demarcation of the passage to a new micro-level discourse unit such as that of an idea unit or a sentence and structures discourse so as to comprise clearly indicated breaks in content and changes in the course of actions; presumably, its application triggers explicit forms of reference (example 1 below). The second strategy avoids marking these breaks for the sake of providing a sense of cohesion and continuity in discourse and of presenting the narrative as a chain of conjoinable and closely linked actions: (example 2 below) e.g.

> 1. Ghiafto **o laghos mas** iche ghini axiotheato ghia olus osus mas episkeptodan./ Ti froditha **tu laghu** tin iche analavi i mitera mu./ Oli mas nomizame oti **o laghos** pernuse kala koda mas./ Omos telika apodhihtike oti **o laghos** perimene tin efkeria na dhrapetefsi. (That's why **our hare** had become a sight for all those who visited us./ My mother had taken over the care of **the hare**./ All of us thought that **the**

hare was having a good time with us./ But it finally turned out that **the hare** was waiting for a chance to escape.)

(Bessi F., written SA)

2. **I mitera mu** katevike ghrighora ghrighora tis skales ghia na ton prolavi/. Vghike omos apo tin porta tu garaz/ ke kathos etrehe ghlistrise pano sti laspi./ Epese kato./ Htipise ke ponese poli/ ki arhise na fonazi ke na klei./ Mazeftikan ghitones/ ke prospathusan na tin voithisun na sikothi apo kato./ Egho tromaxa apo tis fones/ ki etrexa na dho ti simveni./ Fonaze oti ihe spasi to heri tis.
(**My mother** quickly ran down the stairs to catch him./ But **she [lit: ellipsis]** went out the garage door/ and as **she [ellipsis]** was running **she [ellipsis]** slipped on the mud./ **She [ellipsis]** fell./ **She [ellipsis]** was badly hurt/ and she [ellipsis] started shouting and crying./ Neighbours arrived/ and tried to help her stand up./ I was startled by the shouts/ and ran to see what was happening./ She [ellipsis] was shouting that she [ellipsis] had broken her hand.)

(Aggeliki K., written SC)

The data analysis shows that written SsA opt for the first strategy to meet the explicitness requirement of written modality, but written SsC favour the second strategy and thus achieve a sense of parataxis, sequentiality and oral-like character to suit the young audience. By contrast, as will be shown in section 5, SsC abandon this policy when it comes to the demarcation of macro-level discourse units (paragraph boundaries).This difference between SsA and SsC in the preference over these two strategies, in addition to showing the inadequacy of cognitive factors for global explanations of the referential patterning, manifests the need to take audience considerations into account as well: in our case, the difference is mainly a matter of different priorities set by the tellability requirement[4] for the different audiences.

5. Discourse factors and participant tracking

One noticeable thing in the analysis of the data is the use of nominal reference for characters that have already been introduced in the discourse. The choice is marked, since the unmarked referential form for this case is that of ellipsis. Close study of the data showed that this phenomenon cannot be thoroughly accounted for only in terms of cognitive constraints. Without going as far as to say that participant tracking in the data is solely dependent on discourse factors, this section simply attempts to draw certain regularities in the relation between the phenomenon investigated and the shaping of discourse structure, as these are identified in the data: put in other words, it focuses on those discourse factors that co-occur with and/or trigger this kind of nominal reference. To be specific, three such discourse factors (functions) were identified in the data:

1. The demarcation of paragraphs or episodes. Here, the two terms are used interchangeably to refer to a meso-level discourse unit that constitutes a coherent section of text within which there is unity of theme or action in the specified spatiotemporal setting[5] . In our data, the use of nominal reference with or without a shift of participant focus at paragraph boundaries functions as a major signal of paragraph marking (for the same view see Stark 1988): e.g.

a. **To ena pedhi** ... itan anesthito/ itan katakitrino/ poli ashima i opsi/ fenotan ghia nekro/. Telika tin epomeni mera/ mathame oti **to pedhi** ihe pethani... (**One child** was unconscious/ he[ellipsis] was very pale/ his face looked awful/ he[ell] looked dead/. Finally the next day/ we heard that **the child** had died...)

(Vivi K., oral SA)

In this example the passage to the resolution of the narrative is signalled by, among others, the device of nominal reference for the character focused upon[6].

b. Thimame pos itan[ell: **afti i kiria**] pada sto plevro mas/... ke [ell]prospathuse na mas kani na niothume efxarista/. Sigha-sigha pernusan ta xronia/ ke kapote ematha pos **afti i kiria** arrostise/ ke malista ashima. (I remember how she[ell. for **"this woman"**] was always at our side/... and she[ell] tried to make us feel good/. Gradually the years went by/ and then I heard that **this woman** fell ill/ and (she was) quite badly).

(Jiannis B., written SC)

c. Nomiza oti ghenika itan asfalis o frahtis/ oti o **skilos** dhe tha boruse na vghi ekso/... lipon meta **o skilos** ksafnika efighe/ apomakrinthike (I thought that the fence was pretty safe/ that **the dog** wouldn't be able to get out/... well afterwards **the dog** suddenly left/ went away...)

(Antonis M., oral SA)

2. The shift from the storyworld, the world of the characters, to the non-storyworld, the world of the external narrator, in the form of background commentary. e.g:

a. Dhistixos **i mihani** dhen ipirhe eki./ Mu tin ihan klepsi./ Ekini tin epohi **i mihani** ghia mena simene ena soro praghmata... (Unfortunately **the motorbike** was not there./ They had stolen it from me./ At that time **the motorbike** meant quite a lot to me...)

(Takis G., written SA)

b. ... **"ton papa"**/ ton adherfo tu/ o opios then ipirxe pote dhexios o **papas**/ itan aristeros/ oxi aristeros alla venizelikos/ **"ton papa** ton ehune filaki?"/ Praghmati ton ixane piasi/ ke ton ixan pai stis filakes tu Milonopulu **ton papa**... (**"the priest"**/ his brother/ who had never been right wing [lit: who... **the priest**: resumption]/ he was on the left/ not on the left but a Venizelian [political faction]/ "do they have the priest in prison?" [lit: the priest him[clitic] they have in prison?] Indeed they had arrested him[clitic]/ and they had put the priest in prison [lit: and him[clitic] they had put in prison the priest]...)

(Hristos C., oral SA)

c. Vlepo ke ton patera mu/ itane ena horisma psilo/ itane ki pera sa baso/ sikonete o pateras mu (I also see my father/ there was a tall partition/ it was there like a small wall/ my father gets up)[7]

(Hristos C., oral SA)

3. The evaluative function of the narratives, that is, the devices by which a story is presented as tellable (see note 4). In particular, two kinds of evaluation mainly favour the passage to explicit reference in the data: a. Instances of wholly external evaluation or of more embedded evaluation in the form of results of high-point (peak) action; these are classified together because they point to the external narratorial voice through devices such as explicit comment on the story's event, suspension of the action and/or reference to or interpretation of the characters' internal states (reactions, emotions etc.). b. Two internal evaluative devices[8], namely instances of shift to direct speech and of evaluative repetition:[9] e.g.

i) External evaluation

a. ... Me tipote dhe sinerhete**[ell: to pedhi]**/ ihe arhisi na melaniazi/ ihe hasi tis esthisis tis/ itan shedhon pethameno **to pedhi**
(... It is impossible to bring it**[ell. for "the child"]** to/ it had started becoming blue/ it had lost consciousness/ **the child** was almost dead [lit. word-order: was ...the child]

(Thomas H., oral SA)

b. Mathame oti **afti i ghineka** ihe arostisi ashima/... ke i katastasi hirotereve./ Stenohorithika para poli/ ghiati imuna poli sindhedhemenos m'**afti ti ghineka**...
(We heard that **this woman** had fallen very ill/... and the situation was becoming worse./ I was very worried/ because I was very attached to **this woman**...)

(Jiannis B., oral SA)

c. Vjenun exo/ ton pernune/ arhizi ekini **i mana mu** na klei/ na odhirete/ na htipiete... (They go out/ they take him with them/ my mum starts crying/ mourning/ beating herself...)

(Hristos C., oral SA)

ii) Direct speech

a. "Nikoli ti simveni?"/ akuo ton patera me mia foni alliotiki/... Ke tote rihnete o thios stin agalia tu patera/ ke lei/ "Panaghioti, i Eleni pethane" ("Nikoli what's the matter?"/ I hear father saying in an unusual tone of voice/... And then uncle falls into father's arms/ and says/ "Panaghioti, Eleni died")

(Athina X., written SA)

This example is a classical example of nominal reference at the peak of the narrative used for both the person to whom the direct speech utterance belongs and for the character encoded in the utterance (person who is the subject or topic of the reported text, or to whom the utterance is addressed).

b. Ftanun sto **Spiro** pia/ ftasane sto **Spiro** pu leghame oti tha tus ekane kapsonia/ eleftheri **tus lei o Spiros**/ o Pireotis o atimos/ fighete Finally they get to **Spiro**/ they got to **Spiro** who we thought would give them a hard time/ you're free **says Spiros**/ that rascal from Piraeus/ go away

(Ilias G., oral SA)

The first and the second of the above factors (demarcation of units, background commentary) have already been discussed in the literature (Clancy 1980, Fox 1987b, Grimes 1978) as favouring shift to explicit reference. The factor of evaluation which is projected in the data at hand as triggering nominal reference is not irrelevant to the other two. In fact, all three factors have something in common: they all constitute departures from the locally established textual norms. The passage to a new paragraph constitutes a departure from the established spatiotemporal location, participant focus and event-schema; evaluation as defined lately in the literature (see Polanyi 1985) is nothing more but a foregrounding of certain aspects of the narration through the technique of deviating from the text's established style; finally, the breaking of the storyline for background commentary constitutes a departure from the established mode of narration, that is, a shift of footing (Goffman, 1981). Therefore, on the basis of this common element we can form a principle which says that in terms of discoursal factors the use of nominal reference for a character already introduced is favoured by structures which signal a departure from the locally established textual norms.

Looking at the percentages of coreferential NPs in the data which relate to each of the factors discussed above (see Table 2), the first interesting thing to notice is the much higher percentage of evaluative repetition of nominal reference in the SsC rather than in the SsA. This finding can be associated with similar findings in the literature, according to which both discourse for children and from children greatly depends on extensive repetition as a principle of discourse organization (e.g. see papers in Ervin-Tripp and Mitchell-Kernan 1977 (eds) and in Ochs and Schieffelin (eds) 1979). In our case, the evaluative functioning of repetition is a stylistic device driven by the relevant schema (script)[10] available in the narrators' minds about stories for children.

As regards 'the correlation between the other two types of evaluation and nominal reference, they both favour nominal reference in the SsA rather than in the SsC, since the latter, as just mentioned, make more use of the device of repetition from the discussed devices of the evaluative metastructure (the issue of what other implications one could draw from this distribution about the evaluative element in Greek storytelling has to remain beyond the scope of this discussion).

Table 2: Paragraph demarcation, background comments, and evaluation

	Paragraph Demarcation	Background Comments
OSsA	40.0	11.4
OSsC	22.4	8.6
WSsA	38.4	11.8
WSsA	46.2	9.2

	Evaluation		
	a. External	b. Direct Speech	c. Eval. Repetition
OSsA	11.4	12.8	11.4
OSsC	8.6	1.0	51.0
WSsA	11.8	17.7	3.0
WSsA	9.2	1.1	31.5

In accordance with the series of findings so far outlined in the paper showing that adherence to ellipsis is a more "orality-associated" strategy, while explicit reference meets the increase of explicitness required of written narratives, is the higher proportion of shift to explicit reference at paragraph boundaries in the written narratives, both SsA and SsC. This finding also shows that the discourse unit of the paragraph is more powerful in the written SsC in eliciting nominal reference than that of a sentence (see discussion above in section 4.). Written SsC seem to be neatly organized around employing the "thematic strategy" (ellipsis for the character in focus, see the collection of papers in Grimes 1978) within the same paragraph and drastically marking the change of participant focus at paragraph boundaries with nominal reference.

7. Conclusions

This paper has lent support to the view that a focus on cognitive factors alone cannot provide with a thorough and explanatorily adequate description of discourse reference. The major evidence for this was that, despite any exigencies in the Greek language and any language-specific constraints, the results of the analysis were to a great extent congruent with those of previous studies in terms of both the cognitive and discourse factors that elicit explicit or inexplicit forms of reference and of their effect on the referential patterning of a text. Thus, this paper by providing evidence that factors presented in the literature as responsible for certain referential choices in various languages are also valid in the genre of Greek narratives, contributes to the line of research that attempts to establish a set of universal factors underlying referential choice.

The analysis also suggested that participant reference can serve as a point of departure for examining the relation between oral and written discourse; it also exhibited the need for any study of reference to take into account the nature of the intended audience of any discourse and the addresser's assumptions (schemata) about them. In the area of discourse factors, the paper emphasized the role of evaluation in the referential patterning, a factor which has been neglected in the existing literature, though in the data at hand it proved itself to be a powerful discoursal and stylistic mechanism for the elicitation of explicit reference.

Cross-cultural studies have shown that the evaluation requirement is a universal fundamental of storytelling but the devices by which it is actualized and the means by which it is shaped are to a great extent culturally determined (e.g. see Tannen 1979, 1980, 1986). In accordance with this culture-specificity of tellability, it might be the case that the special role which it plays in the participant reference in the data at hand is related to its specific status and conventional ways of realization in the Greek narrative.

Notes

1. Of these two terms, *ellipsis* describes the situation in Greek better, so it is adopted throughout the paper.

2. The basic unit of analysis used in the data analysis was the idea unit (for a discussion of the concept see Chafe 1980). Throughout this paper the examples given are broken up into idea units; the symbol "/" signals end of an idea unit.

3. The issue is much more complicated in the relevant literature than is presented here, due to the highly contradictory findings so far. However, a detailed discussion of the matter is beyond the scope of this paper. For a review of the literature see Biber (1988).

4. The tellability or evaluation requirement refers to the need to provide the audience with an interesting and worth-telling story by stating and enhancing its point so that the "So what?" question arising in all cases of storytelling is answered (see Labov 1972, Polanyi 1985).

5. For a discussion of the terms and of the differences perceived between them by different linguists see Hinds (1977), Longacre (1979, 1983), van Dijk (1983).

6. Notice the relation between paragraphs and the identified parts of a narrative such as peak, resolution etc. As Longacre (1983) puts it, paragraphs constitute the lexemic organization of a narrative on which the categories of its semantic organization are mapped. The beginning of a paragraph in examples b and c for instance signals the turning point of the narrative. In these examples also notice elements such as motion verbs (change of event-schema) and temporal adverbials.

7. Example c differs from examples a and b in that here the background comment does not contain any mention of the participant; in the other two cases, the participant is referred to in both worlds (on the-event-line, off the-event-line) and nominally re-introduced in the storyline when the shift to the comment ends.

8. According to Labov (1972), there are two kinds of evaluation, external and internal. The former refers to the case of the narrator breaking the flow of the narrative and telling the addressee what the point of the story is, whereas the latter signal the point of the story by devices embedded in the action. 9. In Polanyi's terms repetition is "deictic" evaluation, which means that the evaluation of information is encoded in one clause by devices realized in other clauses (1985: 23). Due to this macro-level function of repetition, there is no example provided of evaluative repetition in this paper (reason of space limitations).

10. The literature on these concepts is already vast. For a classical discussion see Rumelhart (1975) and Schank and Abelson (1977). Also see Tannen (1979).

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READING, CULTURE AND COGNITION

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Abstract

A notable feature of current approaches to reading (in first or second language) is a preoccupation with the internal 'causes' of comprehension, regarded as a terminal state of the cognitive system. Yet by allowing only for a private encounter between reader and text, the cognitive approach lacks terms to give more than a contingent account of their participation in a community and history of other texts and other readings. Instead, it reflects the modern myth of the individual as primary social fact and unit of analysis. This paper discusses some of the drawbacks of the cognitive approach, and outlines a more promising, Vygotskyan alternative.

1. The cognitive research programme

1.1 Introduction

A consequence of the 'Cognitive Revolution' in the United States and western Europe, especially since the computer became the root metaphor for information processing in the 1950's (Bruner 1990:6), has been a predisposition among psychologists, and those, including applied linguists, whose disciplines draw on the work of psychologists, to represent mental processes as private computational programmes. Researchers have increasingly adopted the modes of explanation favoured by the cognitive sciences, and framed research questions that invoke them. As a result, the description of human cognitive activity has come to be regarded as largely, if not entirely, synonymous with the modelling of rule-governed procedures internal to the brain, prior to and independent of culturally constructed behaviour. In the case of the study of reading, this has naturally encouraged projects to determine, for example, what occurs 'behind the eye' when a reader understands a text (Goodman 1976), or 'what it means to have understood an utterance in term. of the mental representation that results' (Garrod 1986:226), but has left little scope for the investigation of how the concept of understanding a text might itself vary in relation to historical periods and social and geographical settings, or how a text might affect the life of a reader. Inescapable though such questions may be in many areas of practical concern to teachers, they can hardly be framed within a theory whose interest is in processes supposed to derive from the structural, presumably universal, properties of the human mind. Despite the manifestly cultural origins of reading, therefore, it is usual to find reading models presented as explanatory from which the multitude of its cultural functions are excluded.

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1.2 The aim of this paper

The four premises at the heart of the cognitive approach[1], uniting disciplines (for example, psycholinguistics, artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology) that are in other respects quite disparate, are identified by Williams as:

1 'methodological individualism' - the belief that 'the essential character of [the mind's] inner workings is, ... in certain crucial ways, independent of the individual's relations to other individuals, to social practices, and to environment';

2 'methodological structuralism' - exclusive focus on mature cognitive structure, such that 'learning is modeled on full adult competency';

3 'intellectualism' - 'the idea that all behaviour is to be explained by some prior act of rule-governed cognition';

4 'psychological realism' - the belief that cognitive structures are culturally invariant

(Williams 1989:108-9)

The object of this paper is first to look critically at the consequences for applied linguistics, in particular for the study of reading, that follow from the increasing establishment of these premises as the default assumptions of the discipline, and then to propose an alternative approach to cognition, based on the work of Lev Vygotsky, which can enable reading, along with other language abilities, to be treated as socially situated, socially valued activity.

1.3 The cognitive approach to reading

With the exception of work in the psychometric tradition, whose origins lie in the application of statistical techniques, notably factor analysis, to standardized reading test scores (cf Hewitt 1982), the study of reading has reflected both linguists' accounts of the nature and status of written language, and the large-scale assumptions of learning theory (the former not discussed further here). Since the decline of behaviourism, research both with children learning to read in their mother tongue and with adults reading in a foreign language has concentrated on modelling the specific cognitive processes (word recognition, parsing, semantic interpretation, the conscious or unconscious retrieval of relevant background knowledge, etc.) that are assumed to lead to comprehension, although it has achieved no very clear distinction between comprehending language through the medium of print and reading comprehension as an ability *sui generis* (cf Hill 1988:22). It has been taken for granted, however, that the object of analysis, if not necessarily uniform in its constitution, availability or fluency of operation in given circumstances, is a private, psychologically real property of the individual.

In a recent article, Carrell has offered the following definition of reading comprehension as evidence, from an authoritative source, of the difficulties this subject raises:

> Reading comprehension is considered to be a complex behaviour which involves conscious and unconscious use of various strategies including problem-solving strategies to build a model of the meaning which the

> writer is assumed to have intended. The model is constructed using schematic knowledge structures and the various cue systems which the writer has given (eg words, syntax, macrostructures, social information) to generate hypotheses which are tested using various logical and pragmatic strategies. Most of this model must be inferred, since text can never be fully explicit, and, in general, very little of it is explicit because even the appropriate intensional and extensional meanings of words must be inferred from their context.
>
> (Johnston 1983; cited in Carrell 1991:161)

This text, like many others in the applied linguistics literature, through its choice of imagery signals total commitment to the computational model of human understanding. The nature of reading behaviour, we are invited to believe, is a mystery in just the sense that the functioning of any 'intelligent' system will seem to be a mystery when viewed from outside, when we seek to understand how a complex output derives from various known inputs, themselves complex. Its essence is taken to be the sum of processes executed in a private space between the page and what is often described as the 'click' of comprehension (see, for example, Samuels and Eisenberg 1979:59; Spiro 1980:258), where the graphic display and the reader's existing knowledge interact in unspecified proportions to produce a determinate 'mental representation' (cf Garrod, cited above). Just as the mystery of the intelligent machine's operation will be explained by a complete description of its programme, so, it may be supposed, will the mystery of the reading process, with the added difficulty that in the human case the researcher has to idealize a notion of smooth operation from often defective performance, may introspect about the working of his own reading processes, and must suppose the system he seeks to describe to be more complex than that of any machine imaginable.

It might appear, however, that the development of models in which readers arrive at meaning through the interaction of ('bottom-up') linguistic knowledge with ('top-down') world knowledge, and, in general, increasing emphasis on the role of the latter, differentiate the cognitive approach from the magico-mechanistic determinism implied in the previous paragraph. It is true that, with the rise of interactive models (see, for example, Spiro op. cit.; Carrell et al. 1988), the reader's experience, cultural presuppositions, knowledge of other texts and of textual conventions have all begun to be admitted as independent variables into the account that is given of comprehension, and become the motive for cross-cultural studies (for example, Steffensen and Joag-Dev 1984). Yet while this may be taken as evidence of researchers' growing recognition of the importance of contextual factors as a dimension of reading ability, the focus of interest has remained the dependent psychological variable 'comprehension', in the not wholly differentiated senses of an event in, terminal state of, or output (for example, as a 'mental representation') from the reader's cognitive system. The participation of a text and its reader in a culture and history of other texts and other readings is not considered relevant to the definition of comprehension, but only to the availability of appropriate internal 'knowledge structures' in the individual's cognitive apparatus. Reading research from a cognitive perspective will be concerned with investigating how these structures accommodate new information, the rules by which they operate, and the effects of 'interference' between readers' background knowledge and the knowledge assumed by a text; but it will presuppose no theoretical connection between this culturally specific content and the nature of cognitive structures and rules themselves (cf Williams, op. cit.:109). Thus, once we are sensitive to their

existence, deficiencies in cultural knowledge might simply be remedied by teaching the missing background information (see Steffensen and Joag-Dev, op. cit.).

One implication of this view is that while there can be no doubt that a medieval reader of Hippocrates or Galen and a modern reader of a medical journal are concerned with divergent kinds of text, possess different world views, different beliefs about the nature of human physiology, the etiology of disease, and so on, belong to societies unlike in structure and in the values they attach to many forms of activity, including medical practice and reading, nonetheless the mental processes in which they are engaged, and the criterion for their successful accomplishment (the 'click' of comprehension) are, in all essential respects, identical, a culturally and historically neutral encounter between their cognitive structures and the text[2].

That this should be so illustrates the tendency for models of reading processes to take on a life of their own, less indebted to the nature of the activity they describe than to the theoretical tradition within which they have arisen. Much continues to depend upon the vagaries of fashion. At the height of the Chomskyan revolution, the willingness of researchers to rely on the power of innate knowledge pushed cultural issues to one side, while the emphasis on internal, genetic causes confirmed the authority of the cognitive perspective. In de Beaugrande's phrase, innateness provided a 'bottomless magician's hat' from which to pull ready-made answers to the problems of linguistic capabilities, no matter how far-fetched they might have seemed from any other point of view (de Beaugrande 1984:10). Not only were linguistic concepts such as the sentence candidates to be regarded as part of a human being's innate faculties (see, for example, McNeill 1970:2, cited in de Beaugrande, ibid.): the same could be proposed even for such sophisticated abilities as reading itself:

> In this as in every higher use of language we might as well admit ... that we are up against a major mystery ... Reading is an art and great readers, like great athletes, may be born and not made ... It seems clear that for reading as for all of the higher level language functions, the human mind must be innately programmed, and the job of the teacher is to activate, not to create, the program.
>
> (Eskey 1979:72)

In his enthusiasm for the genetic programme, Eskey forgets to consider that reading is a 'language function' that has been available (the evidence suggests) only since long after human genetic composition achieved its modern form, and even today only in selected cultural circumstances. He also leaves us to guess what sense should be attached here to the notion of a 'great reader'. Chomsky himself has asked of the claims sometimes made for ape signing whether it is likely that any creatures could be supposed 'really' (genetically) to know how to use language yet never have found it worth their while to do so (Chomsky 1975:40); in the same way, we may wonder how plausible it is to suggest that non-literate societies could be 'innately programmed' for reading without showing the least tendency to adopt literate behaviour of any kind, whatever the individual and societal advantages they might stand to gain from it.

It is precisely the fact that (*pace* Eskey) reading cannot be regarded as either universal or elementary in psychological terms, and cannot be reduced directly to universal mental structures or stimulus-controlled processes or associations, that must cause us to doubt the

value of approaches that set out with explanatory aims from exclusively cognitive premises. For it is only in a context of situated and directed action that the possibility of meaning - and hence of understanding - exists. This line of thought will be developed in the third section of this paper.

2. A critique of cognitive methodology

2.1 The cognitive as 'most basic' discourse

It will be objected that there is no need to quarrel with cognitive approaches to reading or resurrect the nature/nurture debate in latter-day form merely to promote a sociocultural perspective. Language behaviour, including reading, can be treated as either the surface manifestations (or output) of the language-user's private cognitive processes, or as public activity regulated by socially established norms. It is customary to represent both orientations - 'inter-organism' and 'intra-organism' perspectives in Halliday's terms (Halliday 1978:12) - as equally valid, if hardly compatible; we may 'do' sociolinguistics or psycholinguistics, but should not expect simply to translate the central issues of one into terms drawn from the other.

It is true that applied linguistics tends to resolve into the competing discourses associated with these two clusters of activities: interpretative on the one hand, explanatory on the other, the former engaged in the attempt to develop subtle descriptions of language use in diverse cultural and educational settings, the latter with psycholinguistic explanation of the phenomena of language learning, with each side often taking little more than token interest in the work of the other. But although the space between them is not uniform (as it would be if there were a simple continuum between the 'facts' of internal and external worlds), and so is not bridgeable by terms drawn exclusively from either, the rise of cognitivism has brought with it the assumption that the exercise of abilities such as reading or speaking a language is to be understood by relating it to features in an internal cognitive programme, ontologically and ontogenetically prior to the facts of social performance. This, in turn, has ensured that the terms used to specify the cognitive programme acquire the aura of having intrinsic explanatory force, and so prompted striking efforts to reduce the description of the social phenomena of language use to the cognitive structures of language knowledge, most notably in the debate over the scope of the terms 'competence' and 'performance' (for a critical review of this literature see D. Taylor 1988). While it might be maintained that 'competence' phenomena only represent idealizations away from the flawed reality of everyday behaviour, no less necessary, if it is to be studied systematically, than are the idealizations of a descriptive grammar, the clear implication is that they represent properties or entities 'in' the mind more basic than observable behaviour, a set of facts about the basis of mental life that serve to make the facts of observable behaviour true (cf Putnam 1981:56).

In pursuit of psychological explanation, researchers are thus induced to look inwards to the sanitized models of readers' text processing systems, etc., rather than outwards to the nature of socially constructed activity. Indeed, work in the cognitive approach has little to say about the concepts usually taken for granted in everyday accounts of human behaviour, such as beliefs, intentions, actions, ideas, consciousness, and so on, for concepts of this kind, clouded with social meanings, are not obviously reducible to a universal, structural description of mental processes, and so (from a cognitive point of view) cannot be

regarded as their cause (cf Bruner op. cit.:8). Sustaining this line of thought, moreover, is a popular conception of the relationship between the constitutive factors in human life, inherited from the 19th-century, which Geertz terms 'stratigraphic' (Geertz, 1975:37): a view of the agent as an organism separated into different levels (whose 'reality' is underwritten by the existence of each as an autonomous academic discipline), in which the biological, as most basic, underlies the psychological, and cultural diversity appears as the shallowest level, colourfully visible but of no more than slight explanatory significance.

In consequence, notions of reading as constituted by a community, and as purposeful activity (purpose necessarily implying a relation to the social environment), or of meanings not 'in the head' but communally available through participation in the language and the culture, do not figure in cognitive accounts. Yet in ignoring the everyday terms used to account for the behaviour of rational agents, the cognitive approach could be said to show a spirit analogous to that in which the logical positivists earlier in the century relegated metaphysical (i.e. non-verifiable) statements to 'the rubbish heap of the nonsensical' (Ayer 1985:130), and thereby ruled out the greater part of human utterances. Nor is there much to distinguish the terminology of information processing, input, output, and feedback from the behaviourist notions of stimulus, response and reinforcement (Bruner, op. cit.:7; C. Taylor 1985:5): merely that, in place of the behaviourist denial of mind, we are now faced with a cognitivist denial of meaning. Thus, comprehending a text is taken to be a matter of privately reconstructing its message, for example by forming the 'mental representation' that may be supposed to have been in the mind of its writer, despite the profound difficulties that attach to treating comprehension as the final outcome of any sequence of cognitive operations (whether beginning with perception, or with the reader's knowledge of the world, or in some combination of the two)[3].

Development of the view that understanding (including the understanding of books) is not the context-free possession of a 'message', representation, or similar cognitive entity, but an ability to act, framed in a context defined by the activities of the community, clearly requires as framework another, less restrictive or 'internal' notion of cognition; and this will make headway only to the extent that the present notion is seen to be wanting.

2.2 The prevalence of metaphor

Infiltration of cognitive language into every corner of research discourse both reflects and consolidates its hold on habits of thought in the research community. Its metaphors are now established in branches of applied linguistics where (on any view) they are irrelevant: speakers rarely remember words, for example, they retrieve items stored in their mental lexicons; rather than know about a subject they activate schemata; instead of hearing or reading a foreign language they are exposed to input; a learner's reading difficulties may be caused by bugs in his processing routine, and so on, sometimes imaginatively. At first sight, such expressions may appear to be no more than the harmless shared terms of a certain discourse community, the 'familiar between-us hum' of specialist speech (Geertz 1988:58), used both for convenience and to promote the continuity and self-esteem of applied linguistics research (showing it to belong to the mainstream cognitive science enterprise); but their ubiquity reconfirms both the computer as the chief source of the field's explanatory concepts, and the causal/psychological as the mode of discourse which serves to ground all others. As Rodger has argued in a discussion of the metaphors of switches and triggers in 'parameter setting' studies in SLA, such metaphors, with their

implication of mechanical causes, processes, etc. are all too easily simplified into literal representations of mental events, with direct consequences for the aims of research and pedagogy (see Rodger 1990, esp. 20-22).

2.3 The role of scientific method

A belief that the natural sciences provide an appropriate model for the study of man, and that adopting a scientific approach means, in essence, reducing all explanations to mechanical ones, continues to enjoy a large measure of prestige in the human sciences (cf C. Taylor 1985:169). And as long as research attention remains focussed on isolated, ahistorical interactions between (for example) 'the learner' and 'the text', 'input' and 'the language faculty', and so on, this belief is unlikely to be seriously challenged in applied linguistics, notwithstanding the mysteries (like that of the true nature of 'competence' and 'performance'), themselves now institutionalized as the *causes célèbres* of the discipline, for which it is directly responsible. On the contrary, if such entities are thought to be inscribed or encoded in the mental structure of the individual language user, the appropriate explanatory procedure will be to find ways to uncover them, to explain how they arose in the mind, and to formulate their specific rules and procedures (cf Chomsky 1988:3).

This naturally suggests a role for experimental research, and the development of techniques to probe the hidden space of mental operations. In this way, the reification of cognitive terms is reinforced by the authority of the experimental method. It is not simply that experiments now and then throw up 'significant' or 'highly significant' results which may too readily be assumed to be the indices of unseen, presumably cognitive, processes (cf Carver 1978; Morrison and Henkel 1970) - although it is relevant to note Hewitt's criticism of the tendency of quasi-experimental designs to falsify complex behaviour by manipulating only a small number of variables in isolation and by making use of small samples under conditions that fail to generalize to normal behaviour (Hewitt, op. cit.:13-15). The point is rather that empirical research too presents itself as a 'most basic' discourse, grounded in a world of transparent fact, where it is aligned with the physicist's project to establish the invariable laws of nature, and insulated against 'contamination' from such apparently contingent factors as cultural variation (cf de Castell, Luke and Egan 1986:7). One consequence of this is that cognitive experiments look for unmediated changes in learners, for example, for 'input' to lead to 'acquisition' as it were by the operation of an invisible cause on an invisible mechanism, but take no account of change in cognitive potential mediated by educational means (a question discussed further in section 3 below). Since, moreover, the form of these experimental procedures corresponds to the popular expectation of objective scientific enquiry, their claims are likely to seem more intrinsically justifiable than epistemological doubts about the status or usefulness of their objects.

The arguments advanced here are not meant to suggest that understanding, reading, etc. involve no mental activity, or that such activity may not be a legitimate object for research. However, while hypotheses concerning it may arise in the description of the brain, its properties and malfunctions, they are largely irrelevant to the attempt to discover what understanding, or any other linguistic behaviour 'really' is: analyzing behaviour into constituent processes, etc., entails nothing with respect to its purposes or consequences,

which are, instead, framed in the social world; it is, likewise, social norms which determine the meaning of the terms used to describe it.

As long as we fail to grasp this clearly, there is a danger that the mystery of reading comprehension, like that of human language ability in general, will remain a mystery of our own making. Too often, Wittgenstein observed, 'we interpret the enigma created by our misunderstanding as the enigma of an incomprehensible process' (Wittgenstein 1974:155; cf Baker and Hacker 1984:346; Hilmy 1987:224-5), and adopt inappropriate empirical/analytical means to resolve it. The mystery implied when Eskey opens his discussion by announcing that 'no one knows exactly what reading is ... despite a library-sized bibliography devoted to reading and the teaching of reading' (op. cit.:68); or when Clarke claims that 'reading is perhaps the most thoroughly studied and least understood process in education today' (Clarke 1988:114), derives not from the nature of reading but from a misleading idea of what we should count as appropriate explanation in this case, 'a [conceptual] muddle ... felt as a [scientific] problem' (Wittgenstein, cited in Hilmy, op. cit.:225). The difficulty is that on the whole it is easier to 'explain' behavioural phenomena (albeit circularly) by postulating hidden mental processes of the kind Wittgenstein had in mind, than (as is required) to rethink the categories by means of which the phenomena are described.

2.4 Truth versus relativism

In certain fields of the human sciences (notably ethnography, sociology, and literary theory) there is a growing self-consciousness about how research represents its objects, and the authority, political as well as epistemic, of the discourse in which such representation is situated (see, for example, Geertz 1975; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Duncan 1991). Yet in contrast to these disciplines, in which critiques of this kind are now commonplace, and which increasingly regard their object not as the attainment of disengaged truth but as the reading of a cultural text in a specific milieu and its translation into (or re-creation in) another, such questions have as yet scarcely surfaced in applied linguistics, committed, as in large part it remains, to the discovery of cognitive universals that are (biologically) true 'in themselves'. Here we find the possibility of cultural difference admitted only as 'parametric variation' in underlying principles, and any more radical account regarded with suspicion as a slide into a free-for-all relativism antipathetic to the scientific method. That the relativizing of world views, explanatory categories, etc., does not imply unlimited freedom of choice, or pose any threat to stability of agreement, or reliable attribution of meaning, is, however, clear from the difficulty we have in detaching ourselves from the conventions of our own dominant - notably literate - habits of thought (those of empirical science, for example). As Fish notes:

> Some institutions or forms of life are so widely lived in that for a great many people the meanings they enable seem 'naturally' available and it takes special effort to see that they are the product of circumstances.
>
> (Fish 1980:309)

Since the specialisms of applied linguistics largely adhere to the conceptual divisions defined by the cognitive sciences, it has become all too easy for practitioners with little interest in trying to cross them to behave as if institutional facts merely followed the contours of nature, as if what differentiated psycholinguistics from sociolinguistics, the

domain of the individual from that of the social, the laboratory from the field, etc. (see Cole 1985:147, table 1), were features inherent in their objects of study, rather than in their modes of analysis and forms of discourse.

2.5 Individualism

The cognitive programme owes much of its success to the deep-rooted cultural (and political) commitment in western thought to methodological individualism (Williams' point 1 in section 1.2 above): to the inviolable privacy of the individual's experience, sense of self and mapping of the world. In Charles Taylor's view, it is this, above all, that accounts for the survival of the computational model's implausible denial of the normal language of rational activity. As he puts it:

> The ideal of disengagement [of consciousness from the world, of the individual from society] defines a certain - typically modern - notion of freedom, as the ability to act on one's own, without outside interference or subordination to outside authority.
>
> (Taylor 1985:5)

Likewise, Bruner observes: 'The notion of the "private" Self free of cultural definition is part of the stance inherent in our Western conception of Self' (Bruner 1986:68); a stance which, as he points out elsewhere, results in the too frequent depiction of human learning

> in the paradigm of a lone organism pitted against nature - whether in the model of the behaviourist's organism shaping up responses to fit the geometries and probabilities of the world of stimuli, or in the Piagetian model where a lone child struggles single-handed to strike some equilibrium between assimilating the world to himself or himself to the world.
>
> (Bruner 1985:25)

In the case of language learning, exposure theories divorce the process of learning from socially created, socially situated forms of education by representing the lone organism in a world of linguistic stimuli. More generally, as noted in section 1.3 above, cognitive premises force a separation between cognitive structures and their contents: schemata, lexicon, etc. contain culturally specific facts, items of information about the world, and so on: but there is no suggestion that this knowledge itself can affect the structure or development of thinking, remembering, linguistic ability (etc.), or attempt to understand how together they might constitute an individual's developing consciousness. Instead, it falls to learners' genetic programmes to determine the stages of their development, under the influence, it may be, of 'triggering' events in the external world, evidence for which will, circularly, diminish still further the need to reckon with the influence of human, cultural mediation.

On the other hand, without a genetic programme of some kind, the cognitive approach offers no clear reason for transition between its successive static structures (cf Spiro, op. cit.:270-1). Learning itself exerts no pressure on development: it is merely a linear accumulation of the elements of adult competence, from which, by backward projection, its nature is derived (Williams' point 2 above; cf also D. Taylor 1988:162). There is thus

no place for the supposition that the process of learning might itself shape the nature of development, that each stage is made possible by the nature of what has preceded it and that cognitive potential might depend critically on the incorporation of external, culturally elaborated forms of behaviour (not least the ability to read and write) into the learners' cognitive organization, setting up new relations within it and new directions for its future course.

2.6 Cultural difference

In education generally, the cognitive approach has had a substantial influence on the conceptualization of learning processes and difficulties, not least those associated (particularly in north America) with bilingualism and its consequences, the abilities of children from minority ethnic groups, and the relevance to them of instruction in the mother tongue as opposed to the second (or majority) language (see, for example, Romaine 1989). It is in this context that its political dimensions - in essence, the questions: 'Whose competence?', 'Whose reading ability?' - have become inescapable. Romaine observes, for example:

> Much of the terminology [used to discuss bilingualism] reflects the ideological bias of a linguistic theory which has been concerned primarily with the idealized competence of monolingual speakers in the speech communities of western Europe and the United States: communities which, on the whole, have a high degree of stability, autonomy and historicity, and possess highly codified standard languages and prescriptive traditions.
>
> (Romaine 1989:251)

The cognitive approach has elevated the cultural norms of western tradition to the status of a biologically determined mental structure, so that, even in the act of affirming the universality of mental functions as a measure of human equality, it risks finding itself aligned with a supremacist tradition that treats difference as deviance, and non-western cultural forms of behaviour as indices of deficiency, etc. Harris, too, points to the high level of linguistic conformity (hence authority) that is necessary for the Chomskyan symbiosis of linguistic and mechanical models (Harris 1987:75; 122). It is perhaps not accidental that the ideology of the 'Melting Pot' should find attractive the myth of the cognitive machine.

3. Framing an alternative

3.1 Basic requirements

It is clear that the promotion of an alternative approach to human cognitive activity will have both to overcome institutional inertia, and to question the premises that underlie a research programme by now confidently established as the 'normal science' of the discipline (cf Kuhn 1970), with a vast investment of academic capital and a virtual monopoly on research problems, hypotheses and methodology. It is clear, also, that questioning the priorities of cognitivism is likely, by definition, to seem aberrant or unscientific; in short, that the effort required is likely to deter even those who sense the need for it.

It is true that in some quarters there has already been acknowledgement of the damaging consequences of unreflecting cognitivism. Widdowson, for example, has asserted that 'individuality is itself a cultural concept: there can be no private independent real person dissociated from the cultural values which define the society in which the individual lives' (Widdowson 1990:13), and has pointed to the dangers of uncritically accepting an idea like Krashen's Monitor Model, which can so readily be regarded as a solution 'assumed to be valid anywhere, like American Express traveller's cheques' (ibid. :25). Likewise, in his critique of research in reading comprehension, Hewitt calls for research

> to take account of the social, cultural and political contexts in which [comprehension] occurs, and how these influences affect how readers approach texts, their attitudes to reading, their comprehension of texts and the effects their reading has on them.
>
> (Hewitt, op. cit.:19)

However, as this discussion has sought to show, it is a forlorn hope to require sensitivity of this kind, without also developing an alternative to the ascendant cognitive ideology. It is by no means adequate or admissible simply to add in culture to psychological mechanisms: to suppose, for example, that context merely modifies the properties of reading that are laid down by a pre-existing internal programme. What is needed is a model of the individual language user (and so, of the learner, the reader, and so on) that is as subtle as the model of language use we presently possess, to escape from the paradoxical state of affairs in which communication is conceived of as a complex, culturally constructed activity, which nonetheless takes place between 'atomic' individuals, whose development is biologically programmed, self-sufficient and prior to surface variation.

3.2 Cultural mediation

The work of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his followers offers a basis on which to construct a model of the desired kind (see particularly Vygotsky 1978, 1986; also Wertsch (ed.) 1985): a non-stratigraphic, culturally informed approach to the analysis of human behaviour that enables comprehension (etc.) to be represented not as the product of a unique and mysterious set of internal operations, but as dynamic and inseparable from a larger context of socially understood activity. In contrast to western traditions in psychology, their approach begins from the recognition that the individual is, first of all, socially formed; or, more accurately, that society and the individual constitute each other

in a single dynamic system (Cole 1985:148); a view that is echoed by the philosopher Charles Taylor:

> the community is not simply an aggregation of individuals; nor is there simply a causal interaction between the two. The community is also constitutive of the individual, in the sense that the self-interpretations which define him are drawn from the interchange which the community carries on.
>
> (C. Taylor, op. cit.:8)

The constitutive role of culture in human phylogeny has been persuasively argued for by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (Geertz 1975, ch. 2). Since, he maintains, the evidence makes clear that the interaction of man's biological capacities with the socially defined environment has taken place from the very earliest times, it is impossible to point to any moment of transition - 'some mental Rubicon' (ibid.:47) - from natural evolution to the possession of culture, from genetic to historical development (a transition presupposed by stratigraphic models). Instead, emerging patterns of culture themselves shaped the world to which man required to adapt, so that (for example) increasing use of tools, the changing configuration of the hand and the expansion of the cortex must be seen as inseparable and mutually reinforcing processes (ibid.:48). In this sense, culture is inescapably part of what humans beings are, a basic condition of their existence. Geertz notes that one of the most striking differences between the new-born offspring of human beings and those of less complex organisms is the incompleteness with which the central nervous system of the former is able to determine its behaviour (ibid.:75), suggesting that increased autonomy and complexity of nervous system activity go together with a diminution in the degree of intrinsic, structural control it is able to exert (ibid.:76), a deficiency in genetic wiring that is supplied by cultural resources. These resources must therefore be regarded as basic constituents of mental activity. 'Like the cabbage it so much resembles, the *Homo sapiens* brain, having arisen within the framework of human culture, would not be viable outside of it' (ibid.:68)

One such resource that Geertz singles out is the use of systems of significant symbols - culture, he suggests, is the totality of such systems (ibid.:46) - that mediate between our genetic capacities and our precise behaviour (smiling enigmatically, speaking in a certain tone of voice, building cathedrals, etc.). Vygotsky's research programme sought to pursue the implications of a similar line of thought in ontogeny; and, in particular, to establish how the complex and specifically human 'higher psychological processes' develop from elementary biological ones, to which, in the face of behaviourist orthodoxy, he maintained they could not be reduced (see, for example, Vygotsky 1978, esp. ch. 6; Davydov & Radzikhovskii 1985:59). In his view, the transition is mediated by cultural forms, above all those of language, which the child encounters in social interaction (first of all with parents and siblings) and, in the course of development, internalizes. Just as for Geertz no sense can attach to the notion of man without culture, so for Vygotsky there is no such thing as individual psychology independent of social context, for it is there that psychological functions first appear: 'the true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual' (Vygotsky 1986:36). Growing to psychological maturity means, in effect, learning to use the set of historically and contextually specific 'tools for thought' made available through the culture. And, like the use of tools in phylogenetic development, it is this that enables the individual to progress in exponential steps beyond his bare biological initial conditions.

3.3 Learning

This model of the individual dissolves the boundary, drawn by behaviourist and conventional cognitive psychology alike, between the domains of mental and social activity ('separating what I can consult in my head from what I can consult in my diary' (Goody 1987:219)). Moreover, it shifts attention from attempts to discover the sequence of learners' unaided and unmotivated acquisition of adult competence to the content and context of the education they receive.

The distinctive feature of Vygotsky's approach to education, not only theoretically but with regard to practical pedagogy, is the dynamic it assumes between learning content and developmental process. Development does not run more or less smoothly along biological tram-lines. It is conceived of rather as a process that is itself subject to change (Vygotsky op. cit.:94; cf Wertsch 1985:20), and 'learning-led' rather than 'development-led'; that is, there exists space within the capacities of the child for problem-solving under 'expert' guidance to extend and transform the nature of the capacities themselves:

> Properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus, learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1978:90)

The distance between (biological) development and the potential level of attainment under tuition, the space in which 'good' learning can occur, is what Vygotsky termed the 'zone of proximal development' (ibid.:84). It is here that the process of acculturation takes place through the interaction of adult with child (expert with novice, etc.), and the means are transmitted that enable the learner to abstract and operate with decontextualized concepts: first, linguistic signs and later, particularly in formal education, symbolic systems such as writing. It is central to the Vygotskyan argument that these symbolic systems are 'already in place, already "there," deeply entrenched in the culture and language' (Bruner 1990:11; cf Wertsch, op. cit.:80), and that being educated into their use unavoidably makes the learner a reflection of that culture.

3.4 Literacy and reading research

Literacy is among the most basic of psychological tools. Becoming literate can extend the capacities of the naked brain, not by changing its inherent properties (which are, perhaps, minimal; cf Geertz's view, above), or by conferring on it the imagined superiority of 'technological' over 'primitive' modes of thought (or any other version of what Goody has called 'the ethnocentric binarism enshrined in our own categories' (Goody 1977:8), but, instead, by supplying a prosthetic device 'by which human beings can exceed or even redefine the "natural limits" of human functioning' (Bruner, op. cit:20-21). These redefinitions, moreover, in the form of the written record and its exegesis, scientific theory, and so on, in their turn enter and shape the patterns and institutions of communal life in constant, open-ended exchange.

The advantage of adopting a Vygotskyan approach, presented here only in bare outline, is that cognition will cease to be treated as the operation of an internal programme, but

designate instead an activity with a temporal and geographical location; thus, it will not be necessary to maintain that the reading of ancient and modern medical texts in the example above (in section 1.3) is 'the same' in any significant sense, but nor will the alternative be a chaos of purely subjective interpretations. Moreover, development will be identifiable not with the extension of mental structures and the accumulation of their contents, but with learning how to act in ways to which the socially regulated notions of purpose, intention, etc. may be attached. As a stimulus for research, this will imply that reading should first be investigated as a product of, and an active constituent in, its many contexts. The notion of 'appropriate reading' will be given by cultural criteria which define, for a given community, what are the normal forms of behaviour with texts. To understand reading in any context, it will be necessary to establish what functions it has for readers, and what roles reading confers on them. Fictions, such as the private 'click' of comprehension, or unmediated cognitive change, will then be displaced by assessment, answerable by reference to public norms, of the extent to which a reader can learn to make appropriate use of a text, at various levels of specificity.

4. Conclusion

It would be wrong to give the impression that there are not difficulties to be faced in the cultural model; use of the term 'culture' itself recalls Goody's remark about the 'conceptual slush' into which analysis flounders on the introduction to it of supposedly basic or explanatory terms 'which themselves need explaining rather than serve to explain' (Goody 1977:46). 'Culture' is not more intrinsically explanatory than the cognitive terms it is invoked to replace; but it is intended here merely to indicate the kinds of facts that will be material to further discussion, and not to designate a specific or necessarily tidy entity.

On the other hand, talk of the mechanisms that operate in sequence up to the 'click' of comprehension, or that are acted on by exposure to language, silences speculation and inhibits understanding by bringing us up against incomprehensible mental processes of the kind to which Wittgenstein referred. The assumption that it is to the function of these mechanisms that we must look for the criteria for our being said to understand a text, or for a theoretical model of language learning, etc. is a tendency ingrained in the models and methods discussed in this paper, and at present widespread in applied linguistics.

Viewed from the perspective developed here, it is not intelligible to speak of 'the reader' or 'the text' as if statements about them exhausted the enquiry. Thinking, learning, language use, etc. cannot be detached from the matrix of cultural and social practices in which they develop, or added in as structural refinements to a model of 'underlying' universal, ahistorical processes. They are, rather, mediated and structured by forms of human activity in the world such that both culture and cognition are strictly inconceivable without each other. It will therefore be necessary to introduce into any description of human cognitive functions and their development factors not latent or genetically wired into the brain, but already given in the culture. One clear benefit this will bring will be a shift of attention from the thin notions of learning current in the SLA-orientated approaches of applied linguistics, to one capable of connecting with a broader theory of education in a way that is potentially of great pedagogic value.

Notes

1. In this discussion, 'cognitive approach' and the adjective 'cognitivist' are used to designate the commitments, priorities and modes of explanation characteristic of a research programme, rather than the beliefs of a particular group of individuals. Researchers who participate in the programme will, of course differ with respect to the extent to which they accept the strongest versions of its premises.

2. O'Keefe makes the point that information processing models of reading take the print conventions of modern English for granted, as if they were transparent features of reading, rather than historically variable formations (see O'Keefe) 1990:17).

3. The analysis of these difficulties constitutes an important strand of thought in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (1953); his views are helpfully discussed by Baker and Hacker (1980, esp. 331ff). See also Putnam 1981:19ff.

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CLUSTER ANALYSIS AND THE INTERLANGUAGE LEXICON

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Abstract

As part of a research programme investigating the interlanguage lexicon of Kenyan learners of English, based on the lexical field of locomotion, a card sorting task was used to produce raw similarity measure data. This was subjected to cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling (MDS). This paper suggests that cluster analysis/MDS of perceived similarities of selected verbs in a sorting task may indicate possible lines of investigation of the lexical knowledge of different groups of learners in comparison to that of native speakers.

1. Research context

This analysis was carried out as part of my research into the interlanguage (IL) lexicon of L2 learners of English in Kenya. By IL lexicon is here meant the lexical knowledge of the target language displayed by a second/foreign language learner. It includes both what the learner uses productively (which is directly observable) and also what he uses receptively (which is only indirectly observable). This working definition takes no position regarding the psycholinguistic nature of this lexical knowledge or its relation to native or other language knowledge. The research objective was to see if there were any significant differences in the lexical performance of learners of English from different first language backgrounds.

The research was based on the lexical field of locomotion, which has been investigated in some depth by linguists of different persuasions (see for example Leech 1969, Ikegami 1970, Miller 1972, Lyons 1977, Talmy 1975, 1985). Two basic trends can be discerned in the literature. Motion is analysed in one as a transition between locational states, while in the other motion itself is seen as fundamental, along with such notions as source, path and goal. The latter theoretical framework has been adopted here and use has been made of Talmy's distinction between verbs that incorporate path and motion and those that incorporate manner and motion. English appears to belong to a group of languages that make particular use of manner verbs of motion (Talmy 1985).

The results of a story retelling experiment indicated a strong overall preference on the part of the Kenyan learners for path-specifying motion verbs, with possible differences related to mother tongue (see Hill 1991). Three mother tongues were represented among the subjects who performed the task discussed in this paper: Luo (32 speakers), Nandi (35) and Olunyore (26). The first two are Nilotic languages and therefore distantly related; the last is a Bantu language. The subjects were all trainees at two primary teachers colleges in Western Kenya and had had at least ten years' education in English. Native speaker benchmarks were provided by 31 children at two secondary schools in the Edinburgh area.

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2. The card-sorting technique

Psychologists have used sorting - also known as direct grouping - as one of several methods to investigate the mental lexicon. Typically, subjects are given a set of cards with words or sentences printed on them and are asked to sort them according to similarity of meaning into as many classes as they wish. The method has been tried with different classes of words. Clark (1968) used it in a study of English prepositions. Miller (1969) tested his subjects with a heterogeneous collection of 48 nouns. Fillenbaum and Rapoport (1971) looked at words in a number of lexical fields, such as colour terms, verbs of possession and evaluative adjectives. Kellerman (1978) employed the method with a set of sentences using a single Dutch verb in a variety of literal and metaphorical senses.

The theory behind each experiment has depended on the preferences of the researcher. Miller (1969) made the assumption that native speakers would sort nouns according to the semantic features they share while overlooking their distinguishing features. By pooling the data from a group of subjects a measure of similarity of two items could be obtained from the number of times the two items were put together in the same pile. The higher the number, the greater the degree of adjudged similarity for that group.

However, feature theory is no longer as fashionable as it was when Miller wrote his paper. It has come under attack from various quarters - theoretical linguistics (e.g. Bolinger 1965, Lyons 1977, Sampson 1979), anthropology (e.g. Tyler 1978) and, more recently, cognitive linguistics (Langacker 1987, Lakoff 1987). It has been criticized for its reductionist 'atomistic' approach to meaning, which imposes an arbitrary structure in which there is no self-evident way of showing which senses are more important than others. There is also no theoretical limit to the number of features that can be identified and we lack a metalanguage to describe some of the components. Nevertheless, it seems difficult to carry out any kind of contrastive lexical analysis without making use of some kind of semantic features - 'as problem-ridden in theory as [they are] indispensable in practice' (Cruse 1986: 22; he prefers the term 'semantic trait').

However, cognitive semantics may provide a solution in the form of prototype theory. To take a relevant example, each of us has a mental image of a prototypical act of running; though this image may differ in some details from person to person and between cultures, a prototypical image is essentially unfocused and non-specific (cf. Lakoff 1987). Now it could be claimed that in a sorting task we are in effect being asked to compare our mental images associated with a number of lexical items and that this is something we do holistically and not on a point by point basis according to what Fillmore (1975) calls a checklist theory of meaning. This does not preclude us from subsequently trying to justify our sorting on the basis of particular shared characteristics.

All of the studies mentioned were concerned with the judgments of native speakers. The present researcher considered that it would be interesting to see what results could be obtained using the card sorting technique with groups of learners from different language backgrounds.

The learners were, as already indicated, at a fairly advanced level; they were undergoing training to teach in schools using English as the medium of instruction. As for the lexical items, the majority (13 out of 20) are to be found in the General Service List. Four of the remaining items are in the Cambridge English Lexicon (i.e. within the

comprehension level of the Cambridge First Certificate). That leaves three items - STROLL, STAGGER and TIPTOE - which might be considered less common, though they are in the Longman English Lexicon, i.e. words that learners at this level would be expected to have at least receptive knowledge of. The full list of items appears below in Table 1.

All the items were inserted in a common sentence frame in order to provide at least a minimal meaningful context:

Juma [V-ED] along the path.

The items themselves were given prominence by being typed in upper case. Each sentence was presented on a card measuring 6cm by 11cm. Individual subjects were handed a set of cards and asked to arrange them into groups of similar meaning. They were told they could make as many groups as they wished and put any number of cards in each group. Apart from this they were not given any further explanation of what was meant by similarity of meaning. Nearly everybody set about the task quite readily. Subjects worked independently but were often in the same room as others doing the same or other tasks. They took between three and ten minutes to make their groupings. No time limit or other constraint was imposed on them. Some agonized for long periods over the allocation of one or two cards or, in rare cases, made complete rearrangements. At the end a few indicated that they were not completely happy with their final choice or pointed out that other orderings would have been equally good. The number of piles made ranged from 3 to 15, with an overall mean of 7.96 and a standard deviation of 2.54; the small differences between the group means were not statistically significant.

3. Cluster analysis

The similarity measures for each group of subjects can be shown in a half matrix. Table 1 gives the raw data for the native speakers. This shows that, for example, 26 subjects sorted LIMP and STAGGER together, whereas only 3 put COME and WANDER in the same pile. It is possible to make interpretations directly from this data, but cluster analysis enables this to be done in a more orderly way.

The origins of this type of analysis can be found in the development of methods of numerical taxonomy in botany and zoology which started in the late eighteenth century. Cluster analysis is itself the name for a cluster of techniques - mostly formulated by mathematical statisticians in the late 1960s and early 1970s as computers came to be more widely used - for grouping together entities of any sort (cf. Everitt 1974; Lorr 1983; Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1984; Kaufman and Rousseeuw 1990). The basic idea is that entities (which can be individuals or objects) in the same cluster are more like each other than they are like those in other clusters. The techniques of cluster analysis are therefore designed to maximize differences between clusters relative to variation within clusters. Similarity or dissimilarity measures (such as those in Table 1) can also be regarded as distances between entities. There are two general categories of clustering algorithms, hierarchical and partitioning. Hierarchical procedures, which involve the construction of tree-like structures, can be either divisive or agglomerative. We shall only be concerned here with the last type.

Table 1: Similarity matrix for native speaker group

A	advanced																				
5	B	came																			
0	1	C	crept																		
3	0	0	D	dashed																	
7	1	0	9	E	escaped																
5	0	0	23	10	F	hurried															
3	2	1	16	7	15	G	jogged														
2	0	8	1	1	1	2	H	limped													
8	4	2	5	4	4	7	1	J	marched												
9	10	1	3	3	2	4	2	5	K	moved											
11	9	1	2	3	2	3	3	4	11	L	passed										
4	0	0	25	8	25	16	0	3	2	1	M	ran									
6	8	0	2	10	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	N	returned								
1	2	6	1	1	1	2	26	2	3	2	0	2	P	staggered							
5	6	7	2	1	2	4	6	7	8	7	1	3	8	R	strolled						
1	3	23	1	1	1	2	8	2	4	1	0	2	9	10	S	tiptoed					
13	4	1	5	6	5	5	1	10	9	8	4	5	1	9	1	T	travelled				
8	10	3	1	1	1	3	2	8	15	13	0	2	4	18	10	5	U	walked			
3	3	4	1	3	1	2	5	7	6	4	0	3	6	15	9	5	9	V	wandered		
7	20	3	0	2	0	2	1	4	15	13	0	3	1	5	7	3	10	4	W	went	

In agglomerative methods the entities with the shortest distance between them are linked first, then those with the next shortest distance, and so on until all the entities are joined in one all-embracing group. Thus in single linkage - also known as the nearest-neighbour method - groups initially consisting of single individuals are fused according to the distance between their nearest members, the groups with the smallest distance being fused first. Each successive fusion decreases by one the number of groups. The furthest-neighbour or complete linkage method is exactly the opposite in that the distance between groups is now defined as that between their most remote pair of individuals. Average linkage is a compromise between these two methods. Other methods exist, with varying degrees of mathematical complexity, such as Ward's method and the centroid method. The choice of method depends very much on what the investigator is using cluster analysis for, but even so is by no means clear-cut.

It should be apparent that cluster analysis is essentially exploratory and descriptive in nature. Since the investigator is free to choose

- the type of similarity/dissimilarity measure
- the clustering algorithm
- the cut-off point for determining the number of significant clusters (though 'rules' do exist for this)

this gives cluster analysis a great deal of flexibility. It also renders its interpretation somewhat problematic. The need for some kind of validation technique is stressed by several authorities (e.g. Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1984). The only one which it was possible to use here was replication, i.e splitting each sample into two and performing cluster analysis on both to check for internal consistency.

Because of the large amounts of computation involved, cluster analysis is only practical with a computer program. I used the CLUSTER program on the SPSS-X statistical package. This program can produce several kinds of output, but probably the most useful and easiest to understand is the tree graph or dendrogram. Figures 1 and 2 are based on the dendrograms produced for two of the groups using the method of group average linkage, which avoids the extremes of single and complete linkage - these tend to produce chain-like clusters and over-compact clusters respectively - and is recommended for general use by, among others, Kaufman and Rousseeuw (1990).

For the native speakers six clusters of from two to four items stand out quite clearly; these merge together with the outlying items to form three large clusters. A similar statement could be made about the Luo speakers, except that the content of the clusters was in some cases quite different. The grouping of LIMP with STAGGER and subsequently with CREEP and TIPTOE is common to both; indeed these two pairs are clearly seen in all the groups, but do not coalesce in the case of the Nandi speakers. However, for the Luos COME and GO only join up in the larger cluster, while RETURN - an outlier in the native speaker group - is closely linked to COME.

4. Multidimensional scaling

A more graphic way of presenting cluster analysis data is by means of multidimensional scaling (cf. Everitt 1978; Hair et al., 1987). This is a set of techniques related to cluster analysis in that they operate on similarity measures, but the results are obtained by a totally different algorithm.

Multidimensional scaling (MDS) programs attempt to find a set of points in a reduced number of dimensions such that the distances in this lower dimensional space are monotonically related to the similarities in the matrix. The monotonicity property (by which a value either never decreases or never increases) cannot in general be completely satisfied and a measure called 'stress' is used to assess the extent to which a configuration falls short of this requirement. Essentially an MDS program begins from an arbitrary initial configuration and proceeds in a stepwise manner making successive adjustments to the co-ordinates in order to decrease the stress.

Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 show MDS configurations for each group of subjects. Notice that Figure 6 is in fact a two- dimensional representation of a three-dimensional configuration, which reduced the stress value quite significantly in this case. It should be emphasized that this is simply a way of displaying the data obtained in this experiment. It may be tempting to regard lexical items as floating round in some kind of semantic space in one's head, but an external representation of what someone knows is not necessarily equivalent to the internal form of that person's knowledge (Bransford and Nitsch 1978).

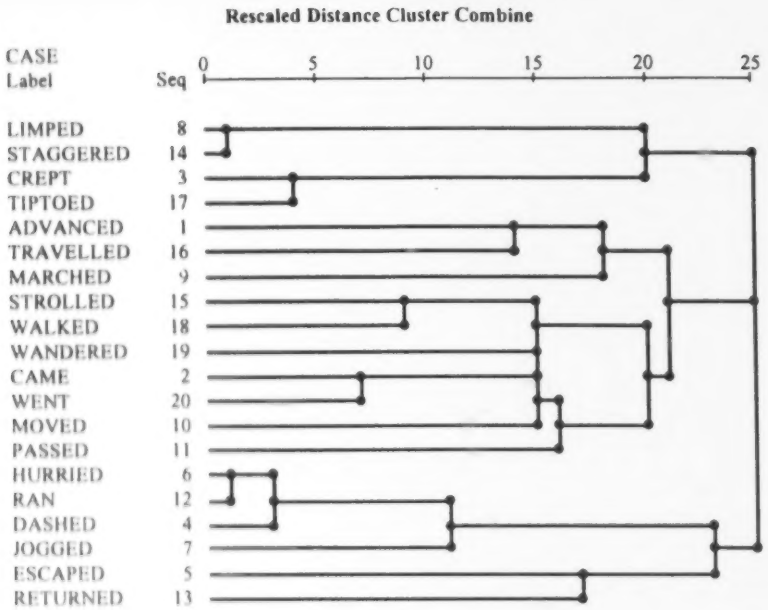

Figure 1: Dendrogram for native speaker group using Average Linkage

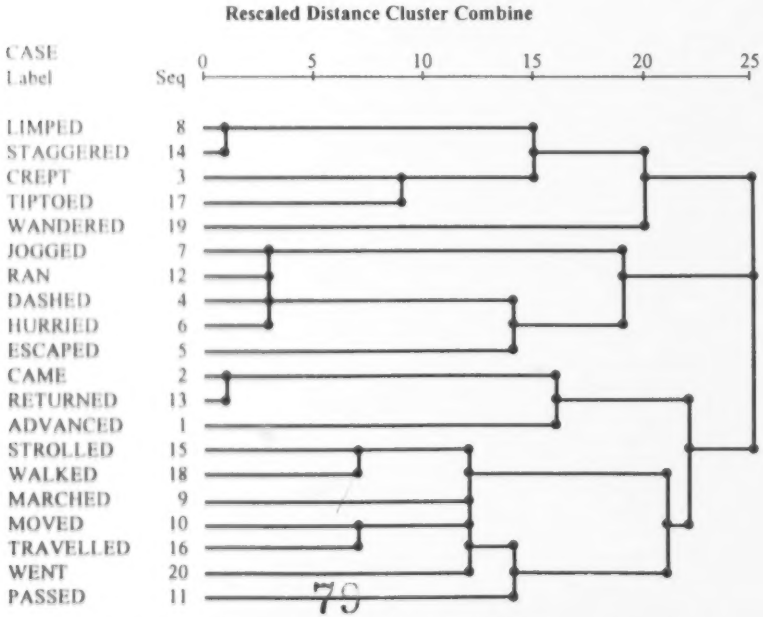

Figure 2: Dendrogram for Luo speaker group using Average Linkage

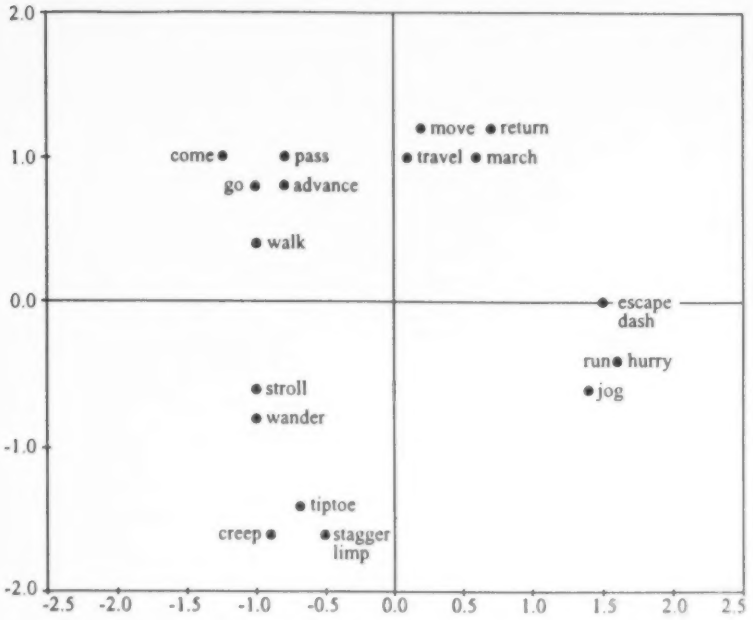

Figure 3: Derived two-dimensional stimulus configuration for native speaker group

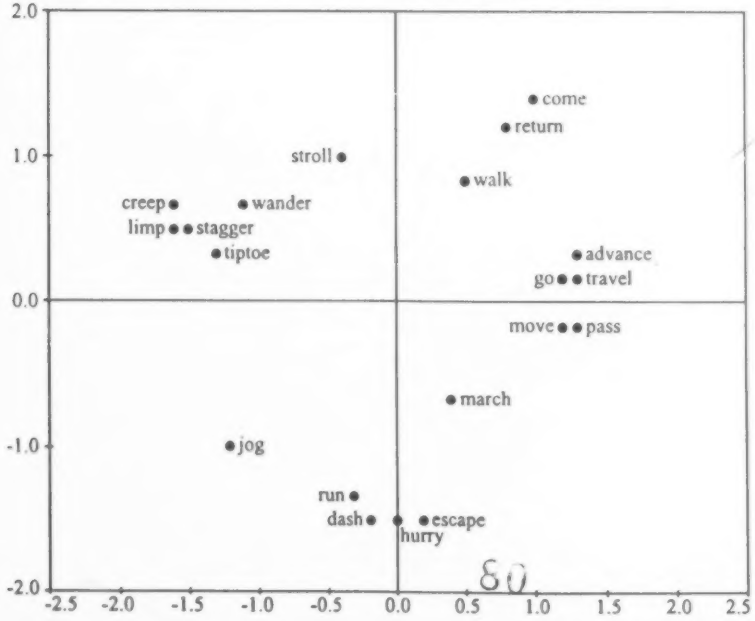

Figure 4: Derived two-dimensional stimulus configuration for Luo speaker group

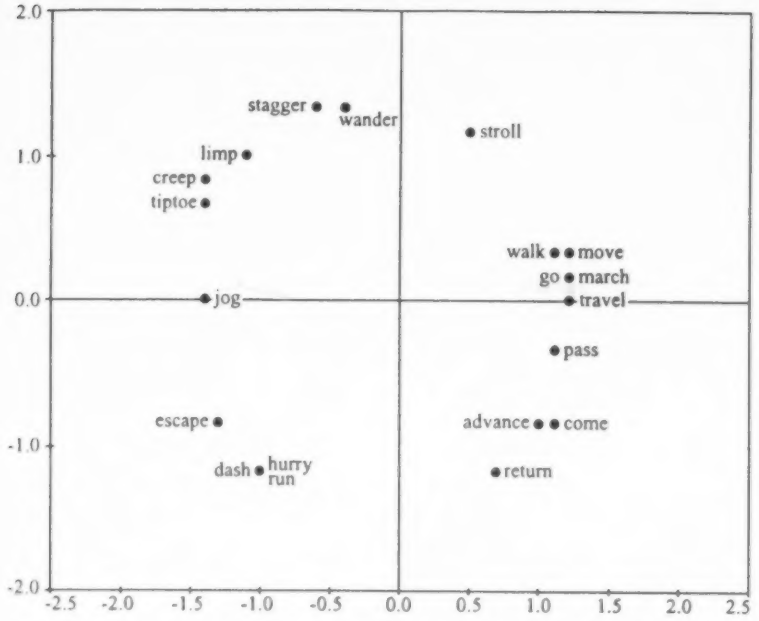

Figure 5: Derived two-dimensional stimulus configuration for Nandi speakers group

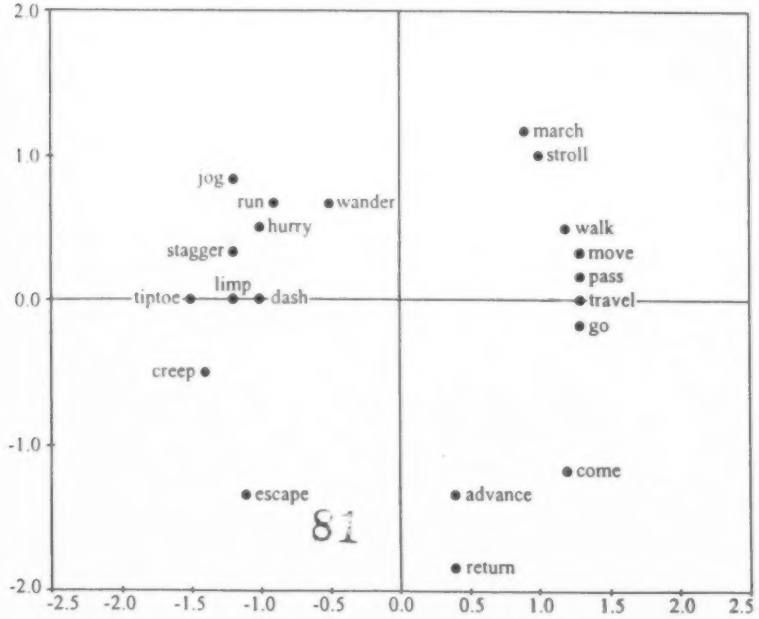

Figure 6: Derived three-dimensional stimulus configuration for Olunyore speaker group

5. Discussion

As suggested earlier, interpretation of cluster analysis and MDS is not a simple matter. In the absence of any real validation tests, one must be very cautious about conclusions. There is also a good deal of 'noise' in the data and there are several intervening variables. Moreover the cognitive demands of this task may not mirror those of 'ordinary' language processing, so we cannot assume that we are gaining insight into actual lexical knowledge. Nevertheless the assignment of COME and GO to separate clusters in all the learner groups seems very clear. COME forms a kind of path/direction group with RETURN and ADVANCE, while GO belongs to a more general group of motion verbs - MOVE, PASS and TRAVEL. For native speakers, COME and GO are much more closely linked; indeed, two-thirds of the sample sorted them together.

There are also differences between the three Kenyan language groups which may be significant. For the two Nilotic language groups ESCAPE tends to go with DASH and HURRY (though less strongly so in the case of the Nandi) to form a group which might be labelled 'rapid movement', while for the Bantu group ESCAPE is linked to CREEP and TIPTOE to make a kind of 'secretive movement' group; this would certainly fit the semantic profile of the corresponding Olunyore verb. ESCAPE is something of an outlier for the native speakers, with weak links to HURRY and RETURN. The separation of LIMP and STAGGER from CREEP and TIPTOE for the Nandi speakers has already been mentioned, although it does not show up so clearly on Figure 5.

A closer examination of Figure 3 might suggest that the vertical dimension could be described as one of 'manner' (all the path verbs are in the top half) and the horizontal dimension as one of 'speed', with RUN and STROLL at the two extremes (though COME and GO should perhaps be nearer the middle than they actually are). The dimension assignments of the other groups are more difficult to determine.

It is obvious that further investigation, using larger samples and a wider variety of techniques, will be needed to test the generalizability of these observations, together with a more profound study of the poorly documented lexicons of the Kenyan languages. However the results so far are at least not inconsistent with the hypothesis that learners' IL lexical categories are influenced by those of their mother tongue.

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INTERACTIONAL LISTENING TASKS : A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STRATEGY AND PRACTICE TEACHING APPROACHES

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Abstract

This paper discusses non-native speakers' use of interactional strategies to elicit responses from or negotiate meaning with their interlocutors in an attempt to solve their problems in conversational listening. It is concerned with the question of whether these interactional listening strategies can be taught as a means to improve learners' conversational ability, rather than allowing them simply to develop as a result of practice. The paper is a preliminary report on a practical experiment designed to investigate the effect of strategy and practice teaching in communicative activities in order to find out the applicability and effectiveness of listening strategy training in the L2 classroom.

1. Introduction

Meaning negotiation is an indispensable feature of conversational discourse. Much research (e.g. Ferguson 1975, Arthur, Weiner, Culver, Lee and Thomas 1980, Long and Sato 1983, Gass and Varonis 1985) has been conducted into the negotiation of meaning by means of linguistic and conversational adjustments adopted by native speakers (NSs) with nonnative speakers (NNSs). According to Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler (1989), the term 'negotiation' in second language studies refers to exchanges between NNSs and their interlocutors as they try to prevent their communications from breaking down and, at the same time, to arrive at mutual comprehension. Varonis and Gass (1985) suggest that negotiation, especially in NNS-NNS discourse, serves the purpose of negotiating for non-understanding or for the continuation of the conversation. In their study, a greater number of meaning negotiations are found in NNS-NNS discourse than in NS-NNS or NS-NS discourse. They argue that the reasons are perhaps the learners' recognition of 'shared incompetence' and their different cultural or educational backgrounds. For conversational participants to reach mutual comprehension, meaning negotiations must lead to comprehensible input which, according to Krashen (1985), plays a crucial role in the process of SLA.

Recent research (Long 1983, Varonis and Gass 1985, Pica 1987, Pica, Young and Doughty 1987) has suggested that modifications made by both NSs and NNSs to the interactional structure of conversations through means such as clarification requests, confirmation and comprehension checks may increase the possibilities of mutual intelligibility which can best assist the second language comprehension of a NNS and thus, may promote acquisition. Long (1983) shows that of the two types of meaning negotiation, modifications made to the interactional structure of a conversation are more extensive and more consistent in NS-NNS discourse than those made to linguistic input. He further argues that this kind of modification is of more importance than input modification in bringing about comprehensible input, a prerequisite for acquisition. In fact, as Gaies (1982) points out, both types of modifications may help to reduce the

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cognitive processing and conversational burdens on the NNS and thus may leave more room for the learners to take in the input and try to comprehend it.

2. Interactional listening strategies

In conversation, especially in the case of an L2 learner trying to communicate with a NS, difficulties may be encountered in getting the message across and this is when communication strategies (CSs) may come into the picture. Tarone (1980) defines CSs from an interactional aspect. She states that under such circumstances, CSs are used by the speaker to try to obtain agreement with a listener on some negotiated meaning; it is not until some response has been given by the listener and the speaker realises that his communicative goal is achieved that he can stop trying to employ further alternative specific CSs. This is, thus, based on the speaker's perception of whether or not the meaning is shared with the listener; if not, it will be necessary for the speaker to resort to CSs. We can see that there is a mutual attempt to negotiate meaning; the speaker will use productive communication strategies to try to get the listener to share his meaning and the listener may resort to interactional listening strategies to signal to the speaker whether the meaning is shared. In normal interactional conversation, productive and listening strategies are inseparable if effective communication is to take place.

Following Tarone's definition of CSs, Faerch (1981) describes receptive communication strategies as cognitive plans which are employed to solve comprehension problems (conscious to interlocutors) in situations where the communicative resources of linguistic and procedural knowledge are inadequate. He further classifies these strategies into : (1) psycholinguistic strategies, which involve cognitive solutions, and (2) behavioural strategies, which involve communicative behaviour.

Psycholinguistic, or internal, strategies involve all attempts to infer meaning - they could be knowledge-driven or top-down, data-driven or bottom-up processing and inferencing procedures. On the other hand, behavioural strategies are interactional/non-interactional receptive CSs. A non-interactional strategy is usually employed in the interest of face-saving, i.e. when the listener does not want to admit to the speaker that he is having a communication problem. An example of this type of strategy is 'avoidance'. However, when a language learner is less coy about requesting assistance from his interlocutor, he adopts interactional strategies, in which production is involved, for self-repair. Two types of requests for self-repair can be classified :

1. General requests - followed by a specific repair in some cases.

2. Specific requests.

There is a third strategy : claiming ignorance. For example, 'I don't know' serves two functions : (1) constituting a minimal reply without initiating a repair-sequence; (2) concealing a comprehension or production problem. In classroom situations, the third strategy seems to be quite popular with perhaps more passive or less motivated learners. Faerch (1981) claims that it is a highly useful strategy. However, this strategy may be regarded as a form of 'avoidance' since the learner does not even try to solve his communication problem by negotiating with his interlocutor.

3. Teaching strategic competence

In their seminal paper, Canale and Swain (1980) divide communicative competence into grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic elements. Strategic competence (SC) is made up of CSs with both verbal and nonverbal aspects. Although there is an increasing welcome for the 'communicative approach' to the teaching of second and foreign languages in most parts of the world, the training of SC has been neglected, especially in overcrowded classroom situations. Tarone and Yule (1989) find that there are very few teaching materials available at the moment which can help language learners to develop the ability to employ appropriate CSs when problems arise in the process of transmitting information. They suggest that a language teacher should provide the learners with actual instruction in using the strategies and to give them opportunities to practise strategy use. However, in those materials that do attempt to teach SC, learners are often instructed to use certain strategies without being informed as to why such strategies are employed or what their significance is in certain communicative situations. Wenden (1986) calls this kind of strategy training approach 'blind training', since the approach emphasizes learning 'something' rather than on learning to learn. For example, note-taking in some listening activities is so geared towards a particular exercise that it fails to provide learners with opportunities to realise the fact that this is a strategy which they can utilize on their own in other contexts. Brown, Bransford, Ferrara and Campione (1983) showed that although blind training often results in improved performance of the task to which it is oriented, learners do not show signs of using the trained strategy after training. Their problem, according to Wenden (1986), is that they cannot identify similar communicative situations in which it can be employed.

Nonetheless, there is now some evidence that SC can be fostered in classroom by providing activities that promote the use of CSs in order to help learners in performing communicative acts successfully. Such classroom activities, as Dornyei and Thurrell (1991) point out, provide language learners with a sense of security in their target language so they can feel more confident in handling difficulties. Moreover, opportunities for the practice of strategy use should also be provided so as to increase learners' ability or select appropriate CSs when there are problems or breakdowns in the communication process. In situations where learners can practise with native speakers of the target language, for example, if the learner is in the country where the target language is spoken, the classroom activities can serve as a supportive or back-up practice. However, in situations where few language teachers are native speakers of the target language and opportunities to practise with native speakers are scarce, a more focussed and explicit approach is necessary (Tarone and Yule 1989). In other words, CSs must be taught on the basis of explicitness of purpose. Wenden (1986) terms training of this kind 'informed training'; learners under this 'informed training' approach should be instructed in the need for certain strategies and their anticipated effects.

Research into the teachability of SC is still limited. However, O'Malley, Chamot and Walker (1987) conclude that there are a number of strategies in language learning which can be embedded into existing teaching curricula. They can further be taught with a bit of extra effort so as to improve the overall class performance. Dornyei and Thurrell (1991) believe that strategy training in language learning not only facilitates spontaneous improvization skills but also linguistic creativity. Paribakht (1985) states that strategic competence seems to develop in a learner's L1 with the individual's increasing language experience and is found to be transferrable to L2 learning situations. Her study suggests that speakers' strategic competence and their proficiency level in the target language

appear to be independent. If this is the case, as Dornyei and Thurrell (1991) point out, it is quite possible to develop strategic competence in language learners since it does not appear to be dependent on other elements that contribute to language proficiency.

Moreover, from the viewpoint of SC, language teachers should help learners to increase their metacommunicative awareness, so that learners know in advance what types of strategies are most suitable for specific communication situations (Faerch and Kasper 1986). Oxford (1989) points out that, apart from metacognitive awareness, there are many factors which can influence one's strategy choice and use. These factors include the language being learned, duration/proficiency level, age, sex, affective variables, such as learning attitudes, motivation, learning goals and so on. Besides, personality, national orign, aptitude and language learning style of a language learner can also affect the choice of strategy type and use. For successful training in strategies of learning and communication to take place, all these factors should be taken into consideration.

In many communicative syllabuses, most of the exercises are designed to focus on strategies appropriate for describing physical or concrete entities or concepts, such as 'a knife', steps in making coffee or in assembling a pine wood shelf. In such exercises, learners may use strategies such as paraphrase or gestures to solve the problem. However, they may encounter greater difficulty when trying to convey abstract concepts and entities, such as 'beauty' or to explain more culture-specific entities, such as 'dim sum'. Faerch and Kasper (1986) underline the need for studies of strategies that expre s more abstract and culture-specific concepts and objects, and may require a different repertoire. In studies conducted by Bongaerts and Poulisse (1989) and Kellerman, Ammerlaan, Bongaerts and Poulisse (1990) in which language learners were asked to describe unconventional abstract shapes, referential CSs were found to be used in the process of description. According to Kellerman et al (1990), a referential strategy involves the selection of specific properties of the referent in order for the speaker to solve his gap in his lexical repertoire and maintain his communicative intent. Such strategies are also called 'compensatory strategies'in the second language literature (e.g. Faerch and Kasper 1983, Poulisse, Bongaerts and Kellerman 1984). Learners are found to make use of not only the perceptual features of the entities but also the other properties, such as functional or locational. Thus, in strategy training, language teachers must see to it that the learners select the minimally distinctive features or properties of the referent in order to bridge the lexical gap in communication. However, this ability may be hindered by the available linguistic resources, the world knowledge of the learner and also his assessment of the linguistic and world knowledge of his listener.

4. Interactional listening strategies : A practical experiment

4.1 Research questions

Most research on strategy training has been done in L1 (e.g. Carrier and Titus 1981, Jones and Hall 1982) and only a few research studies (e.g. O'Malley 1987) have investigated strategy training with ESL students under natural classroom teaching conditions. Further research is therefore necessary in order to look into the feasibility of strategy training, especially in interactional activities, in the L2 classroom. I am

currently conducting a study that is related to the area of listening strategy training. It addresses three questions :

1. whether it is correct to assume that strategies, in fact, result from better listening ability. Thus, it is necessary to discover the source of strategies observed in use, (i.e. whether they originate from the students themselves or from their teachers or materials);

2. whether strategies can be used as a means of or as a short-cut to helping students to improve their listening ability;

3. whether strategy-focussed teaching is more effective than practice-based teaching.

4.2 The study

4.2.1 Subjects

The subjects in the study are either undergraduate or graduate students at the University of Edinburgh, all of whom have taken the University's Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM), comprising sections on vocabulary, listening, reading and essay writing.

4.2.2 Methodology

The study is being conducted in eight stages, as follows :

Stage 1

The subjects were divided into two groups, which were called the Guidance Group (GG) and the Correction Group (CG). The groups were of mixed ability in listening as measured by the TEAM listening sub-test. The teaching focus in the groups would be different: the GG would focus on interactional listening strategies, whereas the CG would receive pronunciation practice. Each group was sub-divided into two classes, making a total of four teaching classes with 13 students on average. It was intended that from each class two pairs of subjects (the Experimental Pairs) would be selected for follow-up work of a qualitative nature, as described under Stages 6 and 8.

Stage 2

The subjects attended a 12-hour training course in conversational speaking using the identical material from *Study Speaking* (Lynch and Anderson 1992). The material selected comprised information tasks which require 'pen and paper' solutions, and scenarios, in which two people have different personal goals and each tries to convince the other.

The training was divided into eight sessions of 90 minutes. To minimize the teacher effect, the four teachers were asked to take turns in teaching each class twice. The teachers were audiotaped, not only to monitor their performance but also find out the proportion of the input to the output of the subjects.

The first training session was of particular importance since it helped to raise the subjects' awareness of strategy use or pronunciation problems and to build up their knowledge of these areas. Each class worked on a 'jigsaw speaking' activity, in which

the teacher gave each person in the group a sentence from a paragraph. Each class member had to memorise their own sentence and the sentences were then collected in. The participants were not allowed to write anything down. Their task was to find out from the others in the group the correct order of the jumbled sentences. The purpose was to familiarise the subjects with the activity type and to make them aware of the kind of communication problems it raises. The activity itself also served as a lead-in to what followed.

After completing the 'jigsaw speaking' task, the students were shown a videotaped performance on the same task by another group of students and were issued with an accompanying worksheet (Appendix A and B). The CG had worksheets on pronunciation problems illustrated by participants in the video, whereas the GG had worksheets on examples of strategy use where comprehension problems arose. They worked on their worksheets when the video was playing. The video was played a second time so the subjects could complete what they had missed in the first playing. The teachers then checked and discussed answers with the subjects.

After the checking of answers, the subjects were given a checklist (see Appendix C and D) according to their Group classification. The checklist contains examples of strategies or pronunciation problems illustrated in the video. The teachers went through and discussed the checklists with the subjects and at the same time, asked for more examples or alternatives.

In sessions 2-7, the subjects were all paired up to do the practice tasks. The teachers went round to each pair, took note of mistakes and then gave feedback to the subjects after each task, oriented towards either strategy use or pronunciation accuracy.

Stage 3

In the final session, the subjects were asked to repeat the TEAM listening sub-test. This was to find out if the subjects' listening ability in general had improved after the training. After the dictation, most of the subjects formed pairs, each of which was asked to go to an adjoining room to do a task in which one partner had to tell the other how to draw a route on a map. Their performance was audiotaped while the teacher went on with the rest of the class to do the practice task.

Stage 4

For logistical reasons, the Experimental Pairs came back the following day to perform the task; their performance was videotaped. Each Experimental Pair was asked to go into a classroom where an OHP and a video camera were set up. The speaker sat behind a screen, whereas the listener sat next to the OHP so he/she could draw the route on a transparency map. The listener's work on the projected map was videotaped. This kind of information task provides opportunities to find out how listeners are required to elicit responses from speakers when information is missing or when communication is at conflict. This procedure was designed to allow subsequent analysis of the listener's doubts and hesitations in the process of completing the task.

Stage 5

After a week, the Experimental Pairs performed a second task. The procedure was identical, and the materials were similar, to Stage 4. When it finished, the listeners in

each pair were asked to come for an interview concerning about their performance of the first two tasks.

Stage 6

A retrospection interview was held after the second task with the 'listener' from each Experimental Pair, conducted in their first language. The interviewee watched the video recordings of their stage 4 and 5 tasks. The subjects also looked back at their transparencies and were allowed to see the videos in their entirety before the interview began. The interviews were divided into two parts with the first part on the subject's perception of the whole training and the second part on the subject's task performance. Questions were based on a questionnaire, completed by the researcher. Questions in the first part of the questionaire dealt with the subject's general problems in learning the target language and their opinion of, or suggestions for, the training. The second half of the questionaire included simple prompt questions such as 'Could you please tell me why you had stopped/hesitated here?' at points in the recording where there was a visible hesitation. Both interviews were audiotaped.

Stage 7

After three months, the Experimental Pairs will perform a final task with identical procedure and similar materials as Stage 4.

Stage 8

A final retrospection interview will be held shortly after Stage 7. The procedure of the interview will be identical to the one mentioned in Stage 6, except that this time only the video recording of the third task will be played and questions based on a questionaire will centre on the subject's task performance and their opinion of the three tasks.

At the time of writing, only the videotaping of the second task has been completed so results and interpretations of the study have yet to be provided.

5. Summary

Available research in both L1 and L2 (e.g. Raugh and Atkinson 1975, O'Malley et al 1987) suggest that strategies in language learning can be both described and also taught. It is hoped that this study can provide empirical evidence on the effect of strategy training in L2 classroom, so teachers will know how to help their students to develop the appropriate strategy for conversational listening.

Moreover, the way in which L2 listeners process and comprehend aural information may provide language teachers with insights into the comprehension processes of a language learner that may assist the selection of material and strategies suitable for classroom practice.

Through strategy training in general, it is also hoped that learners may increase their flexibility in applying the appropriate strategy or strategies. In other words, the ultimate aim of this study is to provide support for such strategy training in language learning, so that learners can take control of their own learning process both inside and outside the classroom environment.

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Appendix A

Guidance Worksheet (extract)

Identify the following communication problems which have taken place in the video that you are going to watch and tick (✓) the appropriate column. Some stretches of text may contain ONE or MORE problem points.

The organisation part : 5 mins.

Note: A and B do not represent the same speakers in each stretch of text.

Stretch of Text	for clarification		for confirmation		for indication of comprehension
	General Request	Specific Request	Approx-imating/ Rephrasing Speaker's Message	Repeating Speaker's Message	
A: ...because I got a sentence, there are so dance and disco in the evening. B: uh?					
A: She, I think, it mean ship. B: ship? A: yeah, I think. She can carry about 2,000 people. C: Okay.					
A: My sentence is Q.E.II is the largest, uh, passenger ship in the word. (voices) A: Q.E.II... B: is the largest?					
A: They must be nice to work on her. B: to work? A: on her. C: on her? A: on her.					
A: The largest is... B: The what?					
A: The largest is ten metre eight. B: by eight? Number eight?					

Appendix B

Pronunciation Worksheet

Identify the following pronunciation problems on the video tape that you are going to watch and tick (✓) the appropriate column. Some stretch of text may contain ONE or MORE problem points.

The organisation part : 5 mins.

Stretch of Text	Word Stress	/s/ vs /ʃ/	Dropping of final consonant and plural / 3rd person endings	Dropping of /l/ before consonant	Aspiration of /p/, /t/, /k/ and /d/
- They all have a beautiful cabin to sleep in.					
-...because I got a sentence. There are so dance and disco in the evening.					
-She, uh, can carry about 2,000 people. She, I think, it mean ship					
-My sentence is Q.E. II is the largest, uh, passenger ship in word.					
-It is four times more expensive than					
-They must (murmur) nice ... they must be nice to work on her.					
-There are open to want to participate					
-The largest is ten metre by eight					
-...because I got a sentence. There are so dance and disco in the evening.					

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Appendix C

Guidance Checklist

1.	making general requests (i.e. the problem points are not specified.)	'uh?' 'huh?' 'Sir/Madam?' 'Excuse me?' / 'Pardon (me)?' 'What?' 'What do you mean?' 'I don't know what you mean?' 'Could you please repeat that?' 'Could you please repeat what you have just said?' 'Could you say that again?'
2.	making specific requests (i.e. the problem points are specified.)	'The what?' 'Could you spell X?' (X is a word) 'What does X mean?' / 'What is the meaning of X?' (X can be a word or a phrase) 'Where do I go from here?' 'Do I turn left or right?' 'Could you explain this more clearly to me?'

For Confirmation

1.	approximating / rephrasing the speaker's message	'Do you mean ...?' -They're having a sale in M and S? -Do you mean they will sell things cheaper?
2.	repeating the speaker's message	-on her. -on her? -You turn left. -I turn left?

For Indication of Comprehension

Explicit -

'Okay.'
'Ah! Huh, huh.'
'Yeah, yeah.'
'Yes.'
'I see.'
'Got it.'
'Uhuh.'
(These may be accompanied by gestures (e.g. head nodding) which may denote implicit indication of comprehension or the listener may carry on what he has been doing.)

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Appendix D

Pronunciation Checklist

Word Stress	/s/ vs /ʃ/	Final Consonant and Plural/3rd Person Endings	/l/ before Consonant	Aspiration of /p/, /t/, /k/ and /d/
cabin	she ship	times metres eight want	world also	play times dance open work

LESSON BEGINNINGS

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Abstract

This paper describes a study of the ways in which teachers of foreign languages (English and other languages) to adults begin their lessons, the purposes that underlie their habitual practices, and students' attitudes to these practices. Among the conclusions reached are the following: (1) in the context described, teachers appear to attach greater importance to affective than cognitive consideration; (2) although individual teachers may operate with a relatively narrow range of activities, there is considerable variation across those involved in the study; (3) despite evidence of a slight preference for more attention to be given to review and preview, students appear to be on the whole quite content with the way in which their lessons begin.

'The danger in trying to set down a plan is that some inexperienced persons may take it to be the plan, and continue to follow it unswervingly from lesson to lesson'

(Rivers, 1968: 375-6)

1. Introduction

This paper describes a small-scale study of the practices of experienced teachers of foreign languages to adults during the first few minutes of their lessons; the thinking that lies behind these practices; and students' attitudes to them.

The study, which forms part of an ongoing investigation at IALS of lesson beginnings and endings, took place between January 1991 and January 1992. For the purposes of the investigation, a 'beginning' is defined pragmatically (rather than temporally)[1] as that part of a lesson between the moment when the teacher starts to interact with students and the commencement of the first major activity. On the basis of the lessons observed in the course of the study, a beginning defined in this way may last as little as three minutes or as long as fifteen minutes and consist of anything between one and six short activities.

2. From hypotheses to research questions

The hypotheses on which the study was based can be summarised as follows:

1. that lesson beginnings can serve a variety of functions. For instance, specific types of activity can be used to:
   - help learners to relate the content of the new lesson to that of the last or previous lessons (cognitive contribution)
   - assess relevant knowledge (cognitive contribution)

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- establish an appropriate 'set' in learners: i.e. prepare them for what is o follow (cognitive or affective contribution)
- allow 'tuning-in' time - which may be especially important in situations where learners have come directly from a radically different environment (pragmatic contribution)
- reduce the disruption caused by late-arriving students (pragmatic contribution).

2. that learners are sensitive to the contribution of lesson beginnings: i.e. value them and recognise the purposes they serve.

Although certain of the ideas under (1) have been previously posited (see the literature review below), they have not so far as we know been empirically validated. We do not know to what extent teachers of foreign languages to adults use lesson beginnings for these purposes - or, indeed, how their lessons begin. Nor do we know whether students feel lesson beginnings to be any more important than lesson middles or endings.

The hypotheses were reformulated as a set of research questions:

- how do teachers of foreign languages to adults begin their classes ? how do the practices observed relate to a hypothesised 'map' of practices ? which practices are most recurrent ?
- what conscious purposes lie behind the observed practices ?
- are lesson beginnings important in the eyes of students ? to what extent are they sensitive to the various activities of which lesson beginnings are comprised ? are there generalisable preferences across students of different types for particular forms of beginning activity ?
- do teachers seem to be providing the kinds of lesson beginning that students want ?

A further hypothesis, which falls outside the scope of this report, was that through an appropriately structured teacher development programme teachers may be persuaded to attach greater importance to lesson beginnings - if these are shown to be important by the study - and incorporate new strategies into their teaching. (This assumes the existence of mechanisms for the dissemination of the results of the research and a willingness on the part of teachers to reflect on their normal practices and, where relevant, attempt to incorporate new strategies.)

3. Towards a system for data analysis

A preliminary survey of the literature on the teaching of foreign languages (English and other languages) had revealed that although lesson beginnings had received some attention, no comprehensive system of analysis had been suggested. Our interest in examining these sources more closely lay principally, therefore, in supplementing and refining concepts derived from our own experience and observation. In other words, we started from our own analytical categories and then scrutinised the literature for further inspiration.

Interestingly, some of the best known EFL methodology textbooks (Allen and Valette, 1972; Harmer, 1983; Hubbard, Jones, Thornton and Wheeler, 1983) make no reference at all - so far as we can see - to lesson beginnings, and a recent article on lesson planning by Parker (1990), ostensibly aimed at newly qualified teachers, contains a blueprint for lesson planning which recommends readers to start their lessons with a 15-minute input stage.

Where advice is given, this may be restricted to the management of resources immediately before the lesson begins - for instance, the importance of checking equipment, the room, the arrangement of the furniture (e.g., Abbott and Wingard, 1981: 266-7). Other writers combine practical suggestions with explanation. Underwood (1987), for example, tells teachers to 'say briefly what the plan for the lesson is so that the students can be aware of the way they are progressing through the work' (1987: 74, emphasis added). Rivers (1968: 376) argues for beginning with a review, a point echoed by Finocchiaro (1974), who makes two further suggestions: that the teacher should 'motivate the need for the new material' (1974: 50) and that the review might be followed by homework correction in the form of a short quiz (ibid: 52). The regular brief quiz, she explains, can serve a number of purposes, among which 'it gives the students a sense of achievement if they've done well' and it gives the teacher 'insight into students' difficulties' (ibid: 127).

Sidwell (1987) and Langran (1987), both writing for the teacher of modern languages to adults (in this case, the evening class student), take a similar position on social interaction. Sidwell, listing the elements that most lessons should contain, starts with 'greetings and general chat' (1987: 6), while Langran emphasises the importance of a beginning which sets an appropriate atmosphere. This atmosphere might be established, he suggests, by playing a song in the target language and by a 'lively warm-up' in which the teacher goes over material from previous sessions (1987: 67).

The broadest consideration of opening activities can be found in Gower and Walters (1983). Like most of the other writers cited, they advise the teacher to arrive early. The few minutes before the lesson is due to start can be used, they suggest, for interaction with individual students, socialising or giving back homework and discussing individual problems. The beginning of the lesson should be clearly signalled, they state forthrightly, after which certain choices have to be made: for instance, between beginning with an inductive presentation, an indication of the topic of the lesson or a brief description of what students are going to be doing in the lesson (1983: 53).

Apart from the fact that they say more about lesson beginnings than others writing from a foreign-language teaching perspective, what distinguishes the treatment of this topic by Gower and Walters is an observation task (an extract from which is given below) which encourages trainee teachers to look analytically at the internal structure of this part of a lesson:

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2. Categorize each beginning and end in terms of the following activities:

A. Greeting the group
B. Greeting individuals
C. Socializing with the group
D. Socializing with individuals
E. Semi-enclosed 'waiting' exercises
You may need to add other categories.

F. Setting homework
G. Returning homework
H. Announcements
I. Checking
K. Time-filling

(Gower and Walters, 1983: 55)

Such a task has potential value in raising trainees' awareness of the structure of lesson beginnings and endings but since the question that it asks is 'What ?' rather than 'How?' or 'Why?' its value is rather limited. For carefully detailed descriptions of what teachers do or why they do what they do we have to turn to the field of general education.

Wragg and Wood's (1984) research into teachers' first encounters with a class focuses on teacher behaviour and characteristics (opening words, means used to secure attention and projecting an image) and therefore provides a useful complement to the study described in this paper. Perrott (1982), on the other hand, offers a relevant framework for a broad-brush analysis of the purposes that drive lesson-initial activities. Writing about presentation skills, she introduces (1982: 21) the concept of 'set' and glosses this as 'pre-instructional procedure'). 'Set induction' (which we have always understood to refer to the procedures teachers use to get learners into a state of readiness for learning) can, she points out (ibid: 21-22), fulfil various functions:

- focus students' attention on what is to be learned by gaining their interest
- provide a structure or organising framework for the lesson
- provide a smooth transition from known or familiar material to new material ('transition set').

Examples are given of procedures (or activity-types) through which these purposes are typically realised.

This survey of literature started from a wish to establish a system for the analysis of lesson beginnings and, as expected, it provided input to the data analysis instruments described below. Incidentally, however, it revealed that in the majority of the EFL/FL texts considered a rather atheoretical approach is adopted to discussion of lesson beginnings. We return briefly to this point in our conclusion.

4. Data collection

Three types of data were collected:

(1) recordings of classroom lessons
(2) recordings of interviews with (a) teachers (b) students
(3) student questionnaires.

This section describes the procedures used to collect the data and the rationale for these procedures.

4.1 Recordings of classroom lessons

In order to obtain a representative sample of languages, levels and teaching practices, twelve teachers, of a full-time teaching staff of about thirty, were videorecorded teaching complete lessons.[2] Recording the classes would, it was felt, provide an objective - albeit partial - record of what happened and would make analysis easier.

Six of the resulting recordings were of EFL classes, these being multilingual groups of adults following a full-time general English course of twenty hours a week; the other six were of once-a-week two-hour 'community' classes in French, Italian, Spanish (2) and German (2) for English-speaking adult learners (hereafter Modern Language - ML - classes).

4.2a Recordings of interviews with teachers

Teachers, all of whom were native speakers of the language they were teaching, were interviewed in English by the researchers as soon as possible after the filmed lesson. The interviews, which were recorded, covered the main events of the lesson and included specific questions on lesson beginnings and endings. The recordings were rough-edited and the sections particularly relevant to the project were then transcribed.

The interviews with teachers were intended to supplement the classroom data in three ways: (1) by offering an insight into why teachers did what they did, i.e. their purposes, explicit or intuitive (these could then be used to test the researchers' checklist of possible purposes); (2) to set the observed lessons in a broader context of self-reported habitual practices; (3) to capture teachers' individual voices: a qualitative (and quotable) dimension.

4.2b Recordings of interviews with students

Six groups of students were interviewed (three groups of EFL students at different levels, a total of eight students; three groups of students of French[3] at different levels, nine students in all). The interviews, which lasted about 20 minutes, were in English and were recorded. A standardised procedure was again followed under which certain questions relevant to the research study (i.e. on beginnings and students' perception of their importance) were asked within the context of a more general interview. The audio-tapes were rough-edited and the relevant sections transcribed.

4.3 Questionnaires

To gather a broader indication of students' attitudes to lesson beginnings, a questionnaire was devised (see extract below) and distributed by class teachers to all IALS students (EFL and ML) at a point roughly half-way through a ten-week term. Since teachers were not asked to follow a set script, student briefing will have been variable, a fact which, together with the voluntary nature of the exercise, may account for the relatively low rate of return overall.

Think about all the classes you have attended at the Institute. Please circle your answers to YES/NO questions.

1. How do your classes normally begin? What kind of things do teachers say or do?

2. Do you think the beginning of a lesson is important? YES/NO Please give reasons for your answer.

3. How do you prefer a class to begin? Give reasons for your answer and examples of any beginning activities that you liked especially.

Extract from student questionnaire

Approximately 160 questionnaires were returned by ML students (31% of the total distributed) and 27 by EFL students (a 72% return). The EFL sample was subsequently enlarged during summer 1991 and November 1991 to bring the EFL total up to approximately 100.

5. Data analysis instruments

Two instruments were designed to analyse the data: a Purposes Checklist and an Activities Checklist. These went through several drafts and the pre-final version was refined following pilot testing on random samples of the data. Even then, as we note below, further modifications proved necessary. Space prevents us from reproducing both Checklists in full, but an indication of their scope can be seen in the tables on p.102 and p.107.

The Purposes Checklist (PC) has two major categories. The first of these, (1) 'to establish appropriate affective framework', reflects the prevalent belief that students will be more receptive if they feel more at ease. The second, (2) 'to establish appropriate cognitive framework', is more lesson-specific, but is also based on beliefs: that students learn best when they can relate new input to what they already know, and that teachers who know what learners know can teach more efficiently. The remaining categories are an attempt to capture other teacher roles and duties. Although designed primarily for use on the teacher interview data, the PC was also used on the student interviews and questionnaires.

The Activities Checklist (AC) was used to analyse the lesson data, i.e. to capture what happened and in what order. The time taken by each of the activities judged to form part of the lesson beginning was also noted. This analysis, and the further use of the AC on the questionnaire and interview data, allowed for testing of the adequacy of the list.

In its most basic form, the AC consists of four categories: 'social interaction'; 'administration and classroom organisation'; 'review'; and 'preview'. Each of these has a small number of subcategories, thus allowing for coding at either a general level only or at both general and more specific levels. Alongside the four basic categories are four further categories. The first of these, 'social interaction with teacher feedback', describes a phenomenon frequently observed in ML classes by one of the researchers, while the second, 'discussion of learner needs and wants', covers first lessons, periodic negotiation of objectives and content, discussion of learner difficulties and other ways in

which teachers involve learners in taking or contributing to decisions about their own learning. The third subcategory, 'activity', caused most heart- searching, since it not only duplicates the global term in the checklist title but is also not easily separable from certain of the other categories - it may, for instance, be the form through which review is realised; the final subcategory, 'other', is a catch-all to include such items as music.

6. Findings

Implicit in the hypotheses and research questions is the assumption that foreign language teaching (to adults) is a unitary concept. At a general level, this may be true, but as far as the participants of the present study are concerned, teachers and students of ML on the one hand and EFL on the other, there is one key difference: context. For instance, whereas EFL students have daily classes, ML students on 'community' courses attend classes only once a week (which is likely to have implications for the importance attached by students and teachers to such elements within lesson beginnings as 'greetings', 'social interaction' and 'review'). Moreover, ML students at IALS are taught by a single teacher, whereas EFL students are taught by two or more teachers in the course of a single day, and the focus within each part of the day is different. These and other contextual differences both within and across the ML and EFL samples inevitably have a bearing on the results reported below.

6.1 What happens - activities

A picture of the kinds of activity that may make up a lesson beginning, speculatively sketched by reference to the literature and our own experience, was built up from the four sources available: videorecordings of lessons, teacher and student interviews, and student questionnaires. Although one objective in studying these sets of data was to arrive at a comprehensive categorisation of activity types, a further objective was to ascertain how these were distributed across the two major groups represented: EFL and ML classes.

6.1.1 Questionnaires

Since the questionnaires offer the fullest description of typical activities, we present the findings from these first. However, in considering the quantitative results of the questionnaires, several points should be borne in mind: (1) since respondents represent a cross-section of all IALS students the findings from the student data and the teacher/lesson data will be at best complementary; (2) because something is not mentioned, this does not mean that it does not happen: it may seem so obvious as not to be worth mentioning; alternatively, it may be omitted because it does not form part of what the student sees as the lesson (e.g. music) or the lesson beginning; (3) the allocation of student responses to activity categories involves an element of interpretation.

The table below shows the number of references in the questionnaires to global categories of activity, several of which comprise a number of subcategories (hence the total of 172 for ML 'social interaction' - more than the number of respondents). Where more than one category was mentioned in the same questionnaire these are noted separately.

Table 1: Activities mentioned as usual
(ML: n = 163; EFL: n = 104)

	ML	EFL
social interaction	172	35
social int. with feedback	4	-
admin and cl. organ.	13	4
review	111	13
disc. of student needs/wants	16	3
preview	41	25
activity	55	44
other	-	3

If one takes into account the contextual differences noted above, there is nothing striking about these results. ML figures for social interaction and review (which includes the return of or comment on homework) are much higher than the equivalent figures for EFL presumably because ML teachers feel the need to pay particular attention to these when a class meets only once a week. It follows from this that if the beginning phase of a lesson typically involves a focus on one or both of these activities, there will be less time (since teachers naturally want to get on to what they and students consider to be the body of the lesson) for other activities in the table. What is perhaps a little surprising is that within the EFL sample the corollary does not apply: we do not see a noticeable increase in the figures for 'activity' and 'preview'.

The higher ML numbers also offer the possibility for comparisons to be made across the 25 groups represented in the sample. Again, space does not permit the inclusion of these results, but certain findings stand out: (1) in two groups, social interaction appears to amount to no more than greetings; in others, it seems to be a very significant category (2) despite the fact that 'activity' attracted a fairly high number of mentions overall, ten groups apparently never begin in this way (3) six groups make no mention of review, while in one group this category receives 15 mentions (4) twelve groups make no reference to preview. The incidence of review and preview is a point to which we return below.

6.1.2 Teacher interviews

From the teacher interviews, we get some feeling for individual differences within the overall picture. For instance, one ML teacher says she prefers always to start with a social interaction phase: 'I used to do it only once, well, every other week or so, and now I do it every week because I found out that they all have something to say one week or the other that is interesting and that starts a very natural discussion, where the others ask questions and so on'. Another ML teacher says she tends 'to recap ... in some way', a common starting-point for two others: 'if it is the second half of something I have done before then I try and draw together what we did last week, remind them and go on from there...'. The two remaining teachers in the ML sample, on the other hand, might often start with homework, handing it back, going over it, asking if there were any difficulties. One makes the point that although she goes into class with something prepared, she might choose to do something different if she sees that students look tired.

In point of fact, all the major categories of activity were referred to in the course of the ML teacher interviews, with one exception - social interaction with feedback - and this was referred to in one of the student interviews.

In general, the EFL teachers seem to place more emphasis on the main topic of the lesson and see the lesson beginning as an introduction to this. These introductions may take various forms: 'something to discuss which will put them in the right frame of mind', 'tiny video tapes [extracts] ... just to get people started ... newspaper story, or a picture ... photograph ... some kind of hors d'oeuvre ... to feed in in some particular way to the main body'. Two of the EFL sample also refer to the occasional use of physical exercises either for topic-related reasons - 'we did health and fitness last week so that was quite appropriate' - or because 'they can be ... particularly pudding-like when they come back from lunch and erm it's important to set the right mood for the afternoon sessions'. One mentions, in the context of 'light relief' her feeling that she ought to help learners to make the connections between the world outside and the language classroom: 'I like to ask them if they've seen any puns on the buses and things like that ... just, er, talk about their experiences in Edinburgh, you know, how they're getting on'. Here, the contextual differences between ML and EFL teaching undoubtedly play a major role, although observation unrelated to the research study indicates that ML teachers also make reference to relevant features of the target culture (films, TV news, etc) that are locally accessible .

6.1.3 Student interviews

The student interviews add nothing to the questionnaires as far as the description of activity-types is concerned (but for a summary of student reactions and suggestions, see 6.3, below).

6.1.4 Videorecorded lessons

Analysis of the videorecordings confirms certain differences between EFL and ML classes in terms of activities. In part, these can be attributed to differences in context. For instance, greetings were not a feature of every EFL class, presumably because teachers had seen students earlier that day; similarly, not all EFL teachers paid explicit attention to attendance, perhaps because the smaller classes in EFL allow for registers to be completed at any point during the lesson or even subsequently.

The most interesting difference is probably in the areas of review (including the return of homework) and preview, as illustrated by the table below, where the maximum number of occurrences in each column is 6:

Table 2: Review and preview in observed classes (ML and EFL)

	occurrences	
	ML	EFL
review	5	2
preview	2	6

The prevalence of review in ML beginnings (the sixth lesson began with a social interaction phase and game which may have also served this purpose in a general sense) requires no comment in the context of once-a-week classes; similarly, it is no surprise that we find evidence of previewing in all the videorecorded EFL classes. The figure for EFL review is a little surprising, perhaps, but bears out the low frequency of this category (referred to by approx. 12% of the respondents) in the questionnaire; that for ML preview, on the other hand, is rather higher than might have been expected from the questionnaire results (mentioned by only 25% of respondents).

Within ML, only one striking general tendency can be observed: the use of the FL from the outset (a point mentioned favourably in many of the ML questionnaires, but hardly a matter of choice in multilingual EFL classes). For the rest, the picture is rather mixed. There is normally some form of social interaction, preceded by or interspersed with greetings, and review normally takes place, though it may take various forms, from a passing teacher reference or brief summary to an oral practice activity; homework does not always figure - this may have been dealt with in another phase of the lesson, of course.

Apart from the fact that, as previously mentioned, all the EFL teachers provided some kind of introduction to the planned activities, an equally mixed picture emerges. One of the two cases of review, for instance, involved a student telling other learners what had been done in a class they had missed and the other consisted of the teacher giving back homework.

In relation to all the practices noted above, we need to remember that each teacher's lesson is only a sample of their normal practice. Because something did not happen during the beginning phase of the recorded lesson, this does not mean that it does not happen normally. It may occur either later in the lesson or in EFL classes at another point during the day.

6.2 Teachers' purposes

What teachers do is arguably less interesting than why they do what they do - their purposes or the desired effects - and the actual effects reported by students.

The summary of purposes in Table 3 below draws on information from three sources: (1) teacher interviews, (2) student questionnaires, (3) student interviews. Strictly speaking, of course, the student-derived data offers insights into effects (of activities) rather than teacher purposes, but since these are often described in rather similar terms and clearly refer to the same concepts, it seems justifiable to treat them as essentially the same phenomena.

Within the table, a distinction is made between the working categories established at the outset of the analysis proper (in bold) and those added in the course of the detailed analysis of the questionnaires and transcripts. A category such as IVd 'facilitate learning' is one way of catching such questionnaire comments as 'if a lesson is not so ... well organised, it will be impossible to follow the entire lesson', but since the facilitation of learning is implicit in the whole checklist, this is not a particularly satisfactory way of formulating a subcategory. It may be that there is also overlap between subcategories. Given our working methods, we have to accept this. Future research in this area may be able to suggest a smaller number of harder-edged categories.

The figures in the interview columns indicate the number of interviews in which reference was made to this subcategory.

Table 3: Teachers' purposes in relation to lesson-initial activities

		T interviews		S qu'aires		S interviews	
		EFL (6)	ML (6)	EFL (104)	ML (163)	EFL (3)	ML (3)
I	*to establish appropriate AFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK*						
a	establish friendly social contact		1	2	34	3	
b	create suitable atmosphere/mood	1		12	30	3	1
c	help ss to relax		2	15	43	2	2
d	stimulate interest	3		41	30	2	
e	acknowledge effort between classes				1		
f	create suitable physical environ.						
g	focus attention	1		21	26	2	1
h	raise confidence		2	1	24		
i	get everyone involved			3	27	2	
j	make class enjoyable		1		16	2	
k	allow time to settle in		1				
II	*to establish appropriate COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK*						
a	stimulate awareness of need			1			
	1 linguistic	1			16		
	2 cultural						
b	provide organising framework			11	10		
c	help ss relate content of lesson to previous lessons	1	2	3	17		
d	elicit relevant linguistic knowl.	3	1		15		
e	elicit relevant experience	1					
f	help ss who missed previous lesson	1			2		
g	'set the tone' for whole lesson	1		4	27		1
h	help ss 'think in target language' right from start		2		59		
i	help ss adopt 'right frame of mind'			2	6		
j	provide necessary linguistic input	1			1		
k	introduce topic		1	4	6	1	
III	*to encourage STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY and INDEPENDENCE*						
a	make ss aware of learning skills and strategies					6	
IV	*to fulfil REQUIRED INSTITUTIONAL ROLE*						
a	give feedback						
b	check on previous learning				8		1
c	give information			1			
d	facilitate learning	1	1	9	32	3	1
e	answer students' questions	1					1
f	give value for money/time				16		
V	*to overcome PRAGMATIC DIFFICULTY*						
a	minimise problems of (and for) ss arriving late				3		

Given the limited nature of the teacher data in particular, any conclusions can at best be very tentative.

On the face of it, there would appear to be marked differences between individual teachers' conscious purposes. It is true that five of the six EFL teachers made some reference to cognitive purposes and that four of these see one role of a lesson beginning as introducing (or 'warming students up to') a topic; nevertheless, the overall picture is a very mixed one, with no more than four of the twelve teachers involved making explicit reference to any of the subcategories included in the table. Again, we should acknowledge that the absence of reference to specific purposes cannot in itself be deemed significant. The picture emerging from the student questionnaires and interviews is rather more uniform. On the basis of this sample, students clearly recognise the affective contribution of certain types of lesson beginning, and this is particularly marked in ML (247 mentions of items in this category by 163 respondents). By comparison, the cognitive contribution is perceived as far less important (it should be noted that of the 159 ML mentions within this category, 59 relate to the use of the TL from the start of the lesson). Other potential functions of beginnings appear not to be very salient, except to students on a course in which announcements are a daily feature.

6.3 Student attitudes

Table 4 below shows the aggregated responses of EFL and ML students to the first question on the questionnaire. 'Other' includes responses where YES or NO was selected but with reservations (e.g. that beginnings were not unimportant but simply no more important than the rest of the lesson).

Table 4: Students' views on importance of lesson beginnings

	ML	(n=163)	EFL	(n=104)
Beginnings important?	YES	137	YES	91
	NO	11	NO	5
	OTHER	12	OTHER	6
	no resp.	2	no resp.	2

The responses speak for themselves: although one ML student stated categorically that 'what I'm paying for is not so much the beginning or the end, but the bit in between', almost 90% of the total sample felt that lesson beginnings are important (and this does not include the positively disposed dissenting voices). Reasons given include the following:

> 'to catch your attention'
>
> 'it can create a good atmosphere in the classroom. An interesting beginning can motivate and stimulate. It can introduce the main theme of the lesson'
>
> 'not to frighten you and vanish little fears'

The questionnaire also asked students what their preferences were with respect to beginning activities. Space does not permit the inclusion of these results, but one

conclusion stands out: on the whole, students are quite content with the way lessons begin. EFL students expressed no preferences for types of beginning different from what they experience as normal (the strongest preference being for an active start) and a large majority of ML students also seem happy to swim with the tide either because they positively concur (64%) with the way lessons are conducted ('I'm happy with the way the global gives way to the specific') or have no strong feelings either way (12%). It may also be the case, as several EFL students admitted, that they have simply not thought in any analytical way about how they are taught; among the minority of ML students who have given the matter some thought, or were prompted to do so by the questionnaire, the strongest calls are for the inclusion in lesson beginnings of review and preview and more variety.

Students' voices are heard most clearly in the interviews, and what comes out very unequivocally in these is the importance of atmosphere and the contribution of a lesson beginning to this. As one EFL learner put it, 'When you are happy you learn very easy'. A positive atmosphere is one in which students feel relaxed in themselves and at ease in the group, such feelings being engendered, they explained, through affectionate greetings on the part of the teacher, set interaction routines such as asking what people have been doing (which, it was recognised, can also serve various linguistic purposes), personally directed questions about known interests, games involving active participation or any other kind of activity in which stress levels are low. Teachers tend to be well aware that establishing the right kind of atmosphere is particularly important at the start of a term or year when, in the words of one ML student, 'everybody is very much "Oh", you know, "who are they ?" and, you know, "How am I going to get on with all these people ?" You need something ... to break the ice at the beginning' (ML). Although one group of more advanced ML learners claimed not to feel the need for 'warm-up' activities when they were well into the year, this does not seem to be a widely-held view: 'the start of a lesson ... really sets the mood' (ML); it gets you 'in the right mood to start work' (EFL).

An appropriate beginning, it was observed, can also aid concentration. In ML classes, the teacher's use of the target language may in itself be a focussing device: 'from the minute you speak to me in French I am having to work' (ML, inter); 'you may refer to the weather or you may have a cold ... something like that tends to focus us individually to you as you come in , and that helps I think to get the cells, the grey cells turning into French ... it takes me probably twenty minutes to begin to be actually concentrating' (ML, inter).

For EFL students, some form of review involving teacher summary or elicitation or further practice was seen as desirable - 'so you don't forget it' (EFL, inter). An ML student also found it helpful to be given the opportunity to ask questions about points arising from the previous lesson or homework.

As far as previews are concerned, opinions were divided. One EFL student would have liked to know in advance 'what we are going to do exactly', whereas the ML advanced interview group, asked directly if they would feel more secure if a teacher stated her objectives, said they did not feel the need for this information and that it might actually militate against sensitivity to learner interests. The differences between students may be explicable partly in terms of learning styles but they probably also have something to do with the length of time students have been working with the same teacher. The same ML group agreed that they were happy to leave things in the hands of the teacher

because they trusted her and another ML student, while confessing that he often felt uncomfortable because lessons began in a unexpected manner - 'I'm totally unprepared for whatever you are going to introduce ... it's a little frightening', went on to say that 'it's probably better that way than to actually start off the same way each week' (ML, elem).

7. Conclusion

At this point, we return briefly to our hypotheses and research questions.

Van Lier (1988: 162) makes the point that lessons are structured (speech) events, but that 'structural statements of the type opening-middle (or main body)-closing do not amount to much, since the same statements can be made about practically any speech event'. He goes on: '...unless the separate sections can be precisely defined in terms of their functions or exponents, the structure is vacuous'.

We have analysed the various functions (or purposes) served by lesson beginnings and described and quantified their exponents (or activities). Incidentally, we have demonstrated that in the context studied these activities are used principally to establish an appropriate affective framework for learning and, to a lesser extent, to establish an appropriate cognitive framework. In this respect, the study also makes a limited contribution, we believe, to current work on teachers' decision-making processes (see, e.g. Lynch, 1989 and Woods, 1989). The teacher sample is, of course, too small to permit of generalisations, but certain contextually-determined tendencies can be observed.

We have shown, as hypothesised, that learners are indeed sensitive to the contribution of lesson beginnings in general terms and that such preferences as they have tend to be more or less satisfied by teachers' existing practices.

We have also made one or two discoveries. In the first instance, we were surprised by the atheoretical nature of most of the writing on beginnings in the EFL/ML literature. This gives rise to the question of whether in the subject-specific training of EFL/ML teachers more use should not be made of insights from general education. Other discoveries are reflected in the changes we were obliged to make to our checklists. However, on the face of it, the most striking result of the study is the extent to which teachers differ.

We wish to make three points in relation to this. First, there is the issue of context. It is possible that if the study had been designed to serve a different purpose, i.e. to compare teachers teaching lessons with similar objectives at the same time of day, it would have produced much more similar results (though for counterevidence, see Peck, 1988). The second point concerns the value that one places on difference. We find no evidence that there is a mismatch between students' wishes and teachers' different approaches to lesson beginnings. Indeed, there is some indication that variety across lessons taught by the same teacher is preferred. Our third point embodies the strong view of this: the diversity represented here, we would suggest, is actually a rich source of ideas. We hope that those teachers involved in the study, and others with an interest in their own further professional development, will feel stimulated to consider which of the practices employed by other teachers might be incorporated into their own repertoires either to

serve their existing purposes or other possible purposes on which the study has shed light.

They might also like to consider the insights provided here into learners' attitudes, from which we single out five:

- the importance attached to the use by the teacher of the target language;
- the value placed on a good atmosphere;
- the preference for a beginning activity which involves everyone;
- the need felt by some students for review and preview activities;
- the liking for variety.

We began with a quotation from *Teaching Foreign Language Skills* in which Wilga Rivers argues implicitly for variety and flexibility in lesson planning, an argument endorsed by students' comments in this study. We conclude with a checklist in which beginning activities have been related to a reduced set of purposes. This will, we hope, be of help to teacher educators and to those seeking by independent means to develop further their own professional competence and flexibility.

Notes

1. Obvious problem: do you define a beginning temporally or in some other way ? The observation task in Gower and Walters - reproduced on p.95 - suggests ten minutes as a cut-off point, but from the teacher's perception the end of the beginning phase is more likely to be defined in terms of e.g. change to or from activity of a specific kind.

2. If the research had been more concerned to obtain a representative sample of each teacher's practice, one snapshot would not have been sufficient, of course.

3. French was the language taught by one of the researchers, and therefore afforded easiest access for research purposes.

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Table 5: Planning lesson beginnings: relating activities to purposes

PURPOSES	ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES
I to establish appropriate AFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK	
a create friendly, relaxed atmosphere	music, introductions, greetings, joke, chat (personal, topical)
b create suitable physical environ.	get ss to arrange furniture
c focus attention	greetings, listening activity, visual stimulus (incl. video)
d make class enjoyable	game, lighthearted oral activity
e get everyone involved	game, pairwork activity, go over homework
f raise confidence	chat (familiar questions, topical issues), controlled activities, review, homework (because prepared), plenary choral activity
g stimulate interest	anything lively or unusual - vary the beginning !
II to establish appropriate COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK	
a provide organising framework	make connections with last lesson, describe activities or objectives for part of/whole lesson, introduce topic
b stimulate awareness of need (ling/cult.)	questions (e.g. based on picture), quiz
c elicit relevant linguistic knowl.	brainstorming, oral activity
d elicit relevant experience	questions
[And to help Ss think in TL/adopt 'right frame of mind', use the TL ! This, together with a brisk start, can 'set the tone' for the whole lesson]	
III to encourage STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY and INDEPENDENCE	
a make Ss aware of learning skills and strategies	consciousness-raising activity (e.g. memorisation game), elicitation of ss' individual strategies
IV to fulfil REQUIRED INSTITUTIONAL ROLE	
a give feedback	go through (previous) homework
b check on previous learning	quiz, game, brainstorm, ask for summary, questions, check homework
c give value for time/money	[This has more to do with how you start - e.g. punctuality and relevance - than what you do]
V to overcome PRAGMATIC DIFFICULTY	
a minimise problems of (and for) Ls arriving late	short (e.g. revision) activities, chat

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WHERE TRUE POWER LIES: MODALITY AS AN INDICATION OF POWER IN TWO INSTITUTIONALISED DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USE

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Abstract

This paper considers the language patterning in two situations, the student-staff meeting and student resolutions, with special reference to how the use of modal items in directives can serve as a guide to the balance of power in student-staff interactions.

Introduction

It is commonly believed in western democracies that the political structures and ways of upbringing together have brought about a situation whereby persons in subordinate positions (e.g. children, students, employees, etc.) have a say in the way countries are governed, institutions are managed and family decisions are taken. Such an arrangement illustrates the consensus view of power, according to which power is not concentrated in the hands of one person or group of persons - an elite - but rather diffused through society (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1988).

In contrast, it is also held that in other places lacking in western-style democratic institutions, there is a sharp stratification of society with power in the hands of one authority figure or an elite, and that subordinate persons lack a say in decision-making. This second arrangement may be said to illustrate the zero-sum view of power, according to which power is non-reciprocal, i.e. one participant in an interaction has power and the other does not.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that, at least in one specific community, that of the Ghanaian university, neither the consensus nor the zero-sum view of power alone can be used as an adequate descriptive framework of the balance of power. First, brief definitions of power, modality and directives will be offered; second, the language data and the analysis will be presented; third, an attempt will be made to explain linguistic behaviour in the light of context; finally the relationship between formality, power and politeness will be discussed.

1. Definitions

1.1 Power

For the purpose of this paper, 'power' will be defined as the ability of a person or group to influence the action of another in the pursuit of the will and goals of the former.[1] This may be real or imaginary in the sense that, in cases where the necessary felicity

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conditions are lacking, the attempt to exercise power may be successfully challenged by the person or persons over whom it is exercised.

1.2 Modality

Modality as a general semantic category refers to all kinds of interpersonal dimension of communication involving the expression of possibility, obligation, permission, ability, etc. as seen from the point of view of the speaker (see Coates 1983, Mitchell 1974).[2]

Although the modal auxiliary verbs in English are the most discussed, other word classes such as nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs do have modal functions (Halliday 1970). In this paper, the term 'modal items' will be used for both modal auxiliary verbs and lexical items which have either primary modal meaning, e.g. *necessary*, or secondary modal meaning, e.g. the verb *implore* in the following sentence:

(1) We *implore* that in every semester the department would draw a calendar informing us of the dates of examinations. ("student-staff meeting")

In this context, *implore*, which is considered rather archaic in British English, denotes 'asking' but it also connotes politeness, which is a secondary, modal feature.

The discussion of the data will focus on one type of modals, referred to as deontic modals, which have to do with the addresser's intention to influence the behaviour of the addressee.

1.3 Directives

These are speech acts by which the addresser attempts to get the addressee 'to do something' (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). According to Holmes (1983) directives can be arranged on a scale of intensity from strong to weak as in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Kinds of Directives[3]

command
request
advise, recommend
invite
suggest
hint

Directives were chosen for study because the way in which they are issued can be taken as the addresser's assessment of his power in relation to that of the addressee. Strongly worded directives imply that the addresser perceives himself to be more powerful than the addressee, while weak directives imply that he or she believes that the balance of power is in the addressee's favour.

2. Data

The speech of students at student-staff meetings (WMM), and resolutions (WSR) was analysed. Both types of text were collected in natural settings in that they were not

elicited but rather produced to meet real communicative needs. The combined corpus was 7224 words long, with WMM contributing 4953 and WSR 2271 words.

These two situations were chosen because

(a) they both belong to institutionalised domains, by which is menat that they form part of the officially recognised actvities of the university,

(b) they both involve students interacting with participants who are regarded to be of a higher status in terms of the usual description of social stratification of the university community (see Eisenstadt 1973),

(c) they both illustrate situations in which the speaker/writer represents a group.

However, the two situations differ in the following respects:

(a) the resolution is judged to be higher in formality than the meeting,[4]

(b) the resolution is written to be read aloud, while the meeting is first spoken and then written, possibly to be read as 'minutes of the previous meeting'. Only the written texts are used in this study.

3. Results of the analysis

3.1. Distribution of modal auxiliary verbs

There were 61 directives in all in the meeting texts, which had a total of 89 modal auxiliary verbs. Of these 26 (26.2%) were deontic in function, i.e. seeking to influence the behaviour of the addresser (Mitchell 1974), e.g.

(2) We have realised that the time allocated for the African literature is very inadequate ... We would therefore like the Head of Department to always allocate two contact hours for the course. (WMM)

(3) The department should ask the library to put those books on the reserved shelves. (WMM)

Most of the modal verbs in the meeting texts with deontic function were the polite forms such as *would* and *could*, or *should*, which in native English expresses weak obligation (Coates 1983), but in Ghanaian English is a variant of *must*. Even the directives without modal auxiliary verbs generally had lexical modals which clearly signalled politeness. Indeed, in some cases both types of modality were present leading to double modality. (This will be illustrated presently).

There were 31 instances of directives in the resolution texts which had 36 modal auxiliaries. Of these 13 (36.1%) were deontic in function, expressing strong obligation, e.g.

(4) All attempts at implementation [of privatisation of university facilities] *should* indefinitely be suspended in the national interest, until alternative suggestions are adequately examined. (WSR)

(5) The administration *should* consult government and without fear of intimidation point out to government the implications of its actions. (WSR)

There were no polite forms in the resolution texts. Where directives lacked modal auxiliary verbs they were not toned down through the use of lexical modals as in the case of the meeting texts.

3.2 Lexical modals

All of these occurred in the meeting texts where they were used in directives which can be located near the bottom end of the scale of intensity, e.g.

(6) They *suggested* that photocopies of Edufa and No Sweetness Here *should* be made available for students to buy. (WMM)

(7) However, we *would plead* with him to consider the student situation. (WMM)

(8) Dr Yankson said he was *appealing* to the house not to disrupt the games. (WMM)

Both (6) and (7) illustrate double modality which underlines the polite tone of the meeting texts. In (6) the effect of *should* is modulated by the verb *suggest* which is lower on the scale of intensity, and hence ensures that the directive does not become too strong. On the other hand, the politeness of (7) may be considerd excessive in comparison with (6), but this is justified by the fact that this directive was the conclusion to a complaint about the lack of warm relations between students and a member of staff, who happened to be the head of department and chairman of the meeting.

Example (8) differs from all the others so far, because the original statement was attributed to a lecturer. Whether the direct speech had the word *appealing* or not does not affect the student secretary's evaluation that the speaker was 'powerless' at that point.

In contrast to the general placatory tone of the directives in the meeting texts, those in the resolution texts were strongly worded and often backed by threats, e.g.

(9) Failure to respond positively to these demands within twenty four hours *may* call for such revolutionary action as *might* not preserve the congenial atmosphere needed for peaceful life in the hall.

(10) We *would* make the University UNGOVERNABLE if Senate insists that examinations should go on as planned. (Original emphasis).

Although *may* and *might* occur in (9), as epistemic modals they indicate the addressers' willingness to carry out the threat and the likely consequence rather than their ability to do so. Therefore, these modals do not signal lack of power. In (10) *would* is merely an example of the conflation of *will* and *would* which is common in Ghanaian English (see Owusu-Ansah 1992 for more examples and a fuller discussion of this phenomenon).

4. Discussion

The result of the language analysis shows that the meeting and resolution represents two different situations in terms of student power as measured in the intensity of their directives. In the meeting situation, they perceive the balance of power as weighted against them and thus tone down their directives, but in the latter they see the balance tilted in their favour and accordingly issue stronger directives. Thus, the meeting situation would seem to support the view that subordinates have little say in the running of the university. This is, however, undermined by what emerges from looking at the resolution, which is clearly that the subordinates have the initiative.

It has been suggested that the intensity of the directives in the two situations may be related to the fact that students feel their demands in WSR are more urgent than those in WMM. There is no evidence from the data that this is the case and at any rate urgent demands can still be formulated in more polite language. However, the present writer's experience is that what is important here is that, faced with the choice of polite and non-polite forms, students invariably choose the latter in WSR and the former in WMM. This observation casts doubt on the theory of 'seriousness of the demand' as a factor in types of directive issued in the two situations under study. The most plausible conclusion therefore is that the choice of directive type is primarily conditioned by the addressers' assessment of their status in relation to that of the addressee in the two situations.

This curious finding has some very important implications. First, it does not support the idea that power is always concentrated in the hands of the persons of higher status. Students, who are of a lower status can and do influence the actions of both academic and administrative staff in the pursuit of their interests.

The question as to why they sound subservient in the meeting situation as compared with the resolution is difficult to answer, but it may be due to the fact that in the latter situation, where speakers represent their classes, they do not feel that there is sufficient 'group muscle' and that speakers in some sense see themselves as personally responsible for what they say at the meetings. In addition meetings are face-to-face interactions aimed at finding solutions to students' problems, whereas the purpose of resolutions is to protest and make demands.

On the other hand, the history of Student Representative Council (SRC) politics at both university and national levels suggests that SRCs constitute a strong political force. Therefore, resolutions, which are mostly adopted at a higher level of organisation than departmental meetings, are situations in which representatives are more confident that they cannot be victimised for presenting the collective view of the group.

Secondly, the results of the analysis have implications for the description of formality. Formal situations are generally believed to be characterised by polite behaviour, including the use of polite language. However, even though the resolution is ranked higher in terms of formality than the meeting, the language of the former is clearly less polite. The tone is belligerent and in terms of the formulation of Brown and Levinson (1987) the directives are face-threatening acts because they leave the addressee with no option but to comply.

The discrepancy between the situational classification and the language patterning is significant, especially as the language data analysed here was provided by representatives of the same students to whom the questionnaire referred to above was administered. This challenges us to rethink the relationship between language and situation. Politeness in the use of language may be the norm in certain formal situations but it should not be confused with formality, since it is possible to be impolite in both formal and informal situations.

5. Conclusion

Student-staff meetings and resolutions represent two situations in which the balance of power in Ghanaian universitites can be studied. Although in both cases students are interacting with participants of higher status, in one situation, that of meetings, their language suggests that they see themselves as bargaining from a weak position. Hence their directives are extremely polite. In the other situations they perceive themselves as a powerful group with the result that their directives are more strongly worded. The complex nature of the power game defies description in terms of either the consensus or zero-sum notions of power. The sample analysed is too small to support any definitive statements, but there are noticeable tendencies which need to be further investigated with the aid of a larger corpus.

Notes

1. This definition combines the views of both Weber and Poulantzas (quoted in Abercrombie et al. 1988) without being committed to the zero-sum view underlying their formulations.

2. See also Owusu-Ansah (1992) for a discussion of the semantics of modals in Ghanaian English.

3. Adapted from Holmes (1983: 91).

4. In a questionnaire asking Ghanaian university students to rank various situations on a scale of fomality of 0-5, the resolution was consistently given the highest ranking (4.5-5.0), while the meeting was ranked 3.5-4.0. (See Owusu-Ansah 1992.)

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TENSE, ASPECT AND THE BUSCONDUCTOR HINES - THE LITERARY FUNCTION OF NON-STANDARD LANGUAGE IN THE FICTION OF JAMES KELMAN

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Abstract

The fiction of James Kelman is clearly not written in standard literary English. This paper examines some of the different ways in which the language of his novels and stories diverges from standard English, and discusses the extent to which these divergences contribute to his stated literary aims. It will be argued that Kelman, in his fiction, is developing a literary language which is neither 'standard' nor 'dialect', but trades on both in pursuit of specific literary ends.

1. Introduction

1.1 The fiction of James Kelman

The recent writing of James Kelman, and particularly his novels, has excited considerable comment on the issue of his use of "dialect".[1] This has ranged from the perhaps apocryphal story of a Booker Prize judge expressing astonishment at a novel "written in Glasgow dialect" being entered for the competition, to more scholarly remarks in approval of the innovative use of dialect as a narrative medium.

This paper aims to provide a preliminary exploration of the issue of Kelman's use of dialect in literary narrative by relating such use to the author's declared intentions, and analysing sections of text in the light of these.

1.2 Dialect in narrative fiction: options

There are a number of contrasting ways in which non-standard dialect might make its appearance in a fictional text. Perhaps the commonest is "dialect as special guest". The use of non-standard forms occurs only in dialogue, so the utterances of the non-standard dialect speaker are in sharp contrast with the surrounding narrative text, lexically, grammatically and/or orthographically. There may be a contrast between the language of such speakers and that of other characters, who may use, in their utterances, a language much more closely identifiable with the language of the narrative text. In sum, here the non-standard dialect appears in island-like chunks in a sea of standard-variety prose. Whether the dialect-speaker is introduced to provide mere local colour or comic relief, or an uplifting blast of old-time peasant virtue, the sociolinguistic point remains: s/he is not 'one of us' - the class of people who read and write novels.

The locus classicus for this use of dialect in Scottish literature is, of course, Scott. Dickens has both comic (e.g. Sam Weller in *Pickwick Papers*) and tragic variants (e.g. Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times*). Hardy, who grew up as a non-standard dialect speaker, is another writer who includes "dialect" speech on this basis. There is a sharp

contrast between the rustic speech of the villagers in a novel such as *Under the Greenwood Tree* and the circumambient fustian novelese which Hardy adopted for his narrative.

A second possibility (covering a wide range of potential variation) is for the narrative prose to begin to take on the characteristics of the dialect of the characters. The best known examples of this type in the Scottish literature of this century are the *Scots Quair* novels by Grassic Gibbon. The distance created by standard dialect prose narrative constantly being set against the non-standard dialect speech of the characters is thus avoided - albeit at the cost of what might at first seem a certain quaintness or preciosity about the text. Local instances of the narrative text "taking on" dialect features can also be found in Dickens.

A variant of this approach is found in multiple-narrator novels, where we are taught to identify the distinctive 'voice' of different characters. In such texts, however, non-standard features of the language are then identified with the thought- and speech-styles of the characters - the authority of standard-variety 'objective' language may not be directly challenged, or may even be used elsewhere in the text. In contrast, part of the power and resonance of Gibbon's narrative style in *Sunset Song* comes from the reader's frequent uncertainty as to the source of the narrative voice - is it the 'voice' of Chris, the main character, of an unidentified gossip, or is it representative of the community consensus? At any rate, by eschewing the authority and impersonality which would be conferred by adherence to the standard language, the narrative voice pointedly does not establish a position which is set over against the characters of the novel and their world.

A further move away from standard narrative text is instanced by the consistent use of marked dialect lexis, grammar and phonology (the last through orthography) in the narrative prose as well as the dialogue. Novel-length texts of this type are rare, but Tom Leonard's *Honest* (collected in *Intimate Voices*) is a short discursive text in this mode, while James Kelman's *Nice to be nice* (in *Not not while the Giro*) is a narrative monologue in this fashion. Here the radical divergence from the standard norm is clear in every line:

> A hid tae stoap 2 flerrs up tae git ma breath back. A'm no as bad as A wis bit A'm still no right; that bronchitis - Jesus Christ, A hid it bad. Hid tae stoap work cause iv it. Good joab A hid tae, the lorry drivin. Hid tae chuck it bit.
>
> (31)

Such works are often given the accolade of tour de force - perhaps because it is felt that using dialect to produce a text of interest to the standard-literate must in itself be a rare achievement - what other literary use could it have but as the occasion for stylistic pirouettes?

2. Kelman's use of dialect

Kelman has been explicit about his literary intentions. He has agreed that one of his aims is to call into question a mode of writing based on an authoritative narrative voice:

> KM: You've stated that you are trying to obliterate the narrator, to get rid of the narrative voice.
> JK: Not every narrative voice, just the standard third party one, the one that most people don't think of as a 'voice' at all - except maybe the voice of God - and they take for granted that it is unbiased and objective. But it's no such thing.
>
> (McNeill 1989:4)

He aims for a true objectivity in his narrative 'so that nobody else is going to be oppressed or colonised by it' (ibid.)[2]. He cites Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh as exponents of the sort of narrative he wishes to avoid:

> none of them seems to have bothered working out that this 'third party voice' they use to tell their stories is totally biased and elitist, economically secure, eats good food and plenty of it, is upper middle-class paternalist.
>
> (op.cit.:5)

Turning now to the means by which he intends to achieve this aim of objectivity, we should note that *Nice to be nice* is in fact practically unique in Kelman's work. It is the only example (easily available) of the sustained use of non-standard dialect as a medium for prose narrative. An examination of some other short texts of his provides clues as to the true nature of his use of English as a literary language. In *undeciphered tremors* or *ONE SUCH PREPARATION* (in *Greyhound for breakfast*) for example, we find qualification and digression piling up on one another to the point where the text appears to risk losing any meaning it might have looked like having. The hedges and qualifications are specifically and inevitably written, standard forms, but here, by virtue of being largely emptied of meaning, they become symbolic of the linguistic authority Kelman criticises in the interview quoted above - one which prevails by form rather than substance.

In such short texts (and also in passages in the novels), we find a negative critique of the forms of public, standard, written narrative English style. Let us take his latest novel, *A Disaffection*, and examine its language to investigate the positive role of non-standard dialect in Kelman's writing.

It is certainly true to say that the novel is <u>not</u> written in standard English. Any page would give a dozen examples to demonstrate this. These include the use of dialect lexis and grammar, but rather little stock-in-trade orthographic mimicry. Here are the opening sentences:

> Patrick Doyle was a teacher. Gradually he had become sickened by it.
>
> (Kelman 1989:1)

This is as succinct an enunciation of the novel's *donné* as would be possible in twelve words. It is also an epitome of the stylistic variation the reader will find in the text. The linguistic contrasts between the two one-clause sentences - stative/dynamic; noun/verb; attribute/process - combine with the indeterminacy of reference of the final pronoun (cf. oral "I'm sick of it" or the near-phatic "It would sicken you, so it would" - suggestive of Bernstein's context-supported "restricted code") and are foregrounded to give a preliminary unsettling nudge to standard assumptions about the language of the literary

novel. We might think of the linguistic variation in this novel (and in the earlier *The Busconductor Hines*, and many stories) as taking place between three styles:

1. An unadorned style of description and narrative (briefly exemplified by the first sentence here), which seeks after a literal account of fact and action with a relentless scrupulousness. Of the three, this style can most easily be thought of as being in the dialect of "standard English".[3]

2. The everyday conversational language of the characters of the novels and stories - varieties of Glaswegian English/Scots. The second sentence of the example takes us in this direction, though its clipped brevity (no cause or further explanation is given) retains much of the factual quality of the first style.

3. The third style, or range of styles, is in the realm of parody and intertextual allusion. To this we shall return later, but can here point out that both the previous styles can move towards this pole at given points, or all three styles can converge in rapidly alternating succession.

One effect of these linguistic characteristics, as in the work of Gibbon discussed earlier, is to raise questions about the source of the narrative voice. In *A Disaffection* this issue is certainly problematic. The narrative voice is neither standard, nor even a constant alternative standard (e.g. a doggedly naturalistic mimicry of dialect speech). In the context of the options for use of dialect in the novel reviewed above, this narrative style has a significant literary function. Linguistically, the narrative voice is neither ours, the readers', nor the central character's, nor that of an identifiable and stable omniscient narrator. At some points the narrative does seem very closely to mimic the mental processes of Patrick Doyle:

> Amazing these coincidences in life. You could actually just be walking down the stairs and something totally amazing could happen to you. Such as? Away ye go.
>
> Such as?
>
> Away you go.
>
> (Kelman 1989:81)

This is reminiscent of the Bloom sections of Joyce's *Ulysses*, but the manner is more staccato and thus appropriate to the frenetic ratiocination which is Doyle's main mode of thought when alone. It is not possible, however, to accommodate the discourse of the novel to a scheme in which either the main character or another identifiable stable narrator speaks (as Trengove (1975) has argued is the case in Gibbon's *Sunset Song*). Just a few pages later we find a passage which seems to be no less imitative of Doyle's thoughts, as he considers his choice of breakfast food:

> He was a heart attack man and that was it finished....Yet okay, the thought of lettuce and cucumber and tomato, healthy portions of cheddar cheese; that had crossed his mind; he was thinking in these terms, maybe for tomorrow. I mean he wasni really that fucking interested in becoming a genuine vegetarian he just fancied getting fit.
>
> (Kelman 1989:85)

While the third person relation of a character's thoughts is a familiar enough literary recourse ('Free Indirect Thought (FIT)' in Leech and Short's (1981) terms), this reading is derailed by the irruption of the immediate and colloquial 'I mean', which is irreducibly suggestive of a present speaking voice. To paraphrase Trengove's question (1975), we are never allowed to become comfortably certain of who, exactly, is you, or he, or I. This uncertainty about the locus of the narrative voice is one of the central means by which Kelman continually brings into question its authority. This acts against its being set against the characters as an objective measure, whether linguistic (by presenting a consistent standard in contrast to the language of the characters) or moral (e.g., by providing a stable source of ironic commentary on character and action, with which the reader is encouraged to sympathise).

Another means used to bridge the gap between narrative and dialogue is the rejection of any orthographic device beyond taking a new line and indenting to signal direct speech. Speech thus becomes typographically all but indistinguishable from interior monologue. Whether something is said or merely thought thus has to be inferred from context. At times it becomes impossible to decide where (or whether?) one ends and the other begins. We might contrast this treatment of direct speech with Grassic Gibbon's, where the direct speech is italicised, but not enclosed in inverted commas. While he also wishes to avoid too rigid a break between narrative and dialogue, the mode of his narrative is more conventional and maintains enough distinction to avoid the ambiguity created by Kelman's sparser marking.

To further illustrate the three styles referred to earlier, and to show how they operate to constantly question the source of the narrative voice, we will consider a longer passage from *The Busconductor Hines*. Here Hines is considering the possibility of simulating a fall to give him an excuse for going home from work:

> All this would be worthwhile if only he could get home. Sandra would be there and would be there for a further 2 hours. It is not that a Hines should not work. A Hines should certainly of course work. He considers it good for the thing.
>
> The fall was rejected.
>
> Signing off sick in order that one may return home immediately is nothing less than a step to the rear, the which step belonging to the past and not the present. And the present should not be said to be yesterday. One of the more fascinating aspects of the lower orders is their peculiar ideas on time and motion. This used to always be being exemplified by the Busconductor Hines. He had assumed the world as a State of Flux. All things aboard the world are constantly on the move. Ding ding. Being an object aboard the world I am indeed on the go. As a method of survival it is marvellous. Hines can marvel.
>
> (Kelman 1985:85)

It should be noted, first of all, that the fundamental narrative logic throughout this passage is that of an interior monologue. First, a course of action is proposed and considered, only to be abruptly rejected, and then, in the subsequent elaboration on the decision, we get an indication of the reasons for this. This movement of thought, however, is negotiated through numerous changes of style. In the first two sentences of

the extract we find an apparently straightforward use of FIT, yet this gives way to the highly depersonalised and anomalous reference to generic 'a Hines', and the laws proper to him (it?). We may wish to consider this inflection a product of Hines own ironic self-contemplation, but this leads to a bizarre dissociation from self when 'He (Hines) considers it good for the thing (generic Hines)'. Again, the decision which is the pivot of the two paragraphs is ostensibly presented in the bald, factual style (no.1), yet it has a performative, as much as descriptive, force, reversing the earlier determination.

The following paragraph exemplifies a frequent recourse in such evocations of cogitation: a variation on a cliché which would not be implausible as an ironic conversational remark (here, 'a step to the rear' for "a step backwards") is developed to an extent far beyond what we would expect in informal speech. By the time we get to what is essentially the third version of the same idea ('The present should not be said to be yesterday.'), the boundaries of logic and comprehensibility are near to being breached. We then snap back into clarity, but find ourselves with a sentence reminiscent of social anthropology 'One of the more....'.[4] The text then veers back towards FIT only to emerge with "I am on the go" before another (self-?) objectification in "Hines can marvel".

To recall the earlier discussion of the "three styles", we can see in the passage just examined how the third, parodic and intertextual style emerges from a combination of elements of the first two. The dry, impersonal logic of the first style warps the hackneyed "step backwards" out of recognition, while the disorienting switches from first to third person, and impersonal narrative to FIT, feed off the conversational quirks of the character in question.

To choose just one case of intertextual allusive play as it occurs in the dialogue of the novel we could cite the parodic courtroom language in the following exchange about the failure of an inspector to censure a driver for leaving the terminus late:

> What d'you make of it? point for discussion?
> Could be. A strange kettle of parsnips.
> Exactly what I thought.
> Maybe he was asleep standing up.
> He was puffing a pipe.
> Did the witness see the actual smoke?
> No your honour. (op.cit.:62)

As a final example of the way in which the linguistic styles of the novel interact, we might take this further passage from *The Busconductor Hines* where Hines morosely contemplates the view of ageing tenements from his window:

> Better off razing the lot to the ground. And renting a team of steamroadrollers to flatten the dump properly, compressing the earth and what is upon and within, crushing every last pore to squeeze out the remaining gaseous elements until at last that one rectangular mass is appearing, all set for sowing. The past century is due burial; it is always been being forgotten.
>
> (op.cit.:168).

We shall set aside the biblical echoes and scientific-technical forms here. It is the last verb phrase which is most noteworthy for present purposes. While it is based on a non-standard form (the expansion of 'it's' to 'it is' rather than 'it has' - an example of a written non-standard form), the "standard version" ("It has always been being forgotten") is also anomalous - in Coseriu's (1967) terms it is an example of a systemically possible form which is not (or at best only marginally) part of the attested linguistic 'Norm'. The result is entirely appropriate to its purpose as an expression of the ending, yet never-ending, influence of the past on the present. What it is not is a sentence which can be classified as either "standard" or "non-standard" dialect. It exists in a literary space which is based on, yet independent of, both.

3. Conclusion

In Kelman's fiction there is a constant undermining of conventional assumptions about the language and narrative voice of the texts. He works within the linguistic forms made available by both standard and non-standard dialect, and across to other dialects and texts.

As a point of departure for further study of his literary style, it might be worthwhile to consider the similarities between his ('his') narrative voice and Alasdair Gray's autobiographical remarks:

> When I notice I am saying something glib, naïve, pompous, too erudite, too optimistic, or too insanely grim I try to disarm criticism by switching my midland Scottish accent to a phony form of Cockney, Irish, Oxbridge, German, American or even Scottish.
>
> (Gray 1988:1)

While this does not directly describe a literary use of language, it is not hard to see the similarity with the typical mode of discourse (whether spoken aloud or not) of Patrick Doyle and The Busconductor Hines and also with the typical mode of discourse of the narrative text which surrounds their utterances and is at times indistinguishable from them.

Kelman's fiction is written neither in standard nor non-standard dialect. We should rather say that it is written out of both.

Notes

1. The quotes indicate a rejection of the common (non-technical) usage which opposes "dialect(s)" to "standard language". In what follows, the distinction is to be understood as between "non-standard dialect" (here chiefly varieties of Scots/Scottish English) and "standard dialect" (the standard written variety of English used in unmarked narrative and descriptive writing). This terminology may be unsatisfactory and rather clumsy, not to say question-begging, but its validity for the discussion of the language of Kelman's fiction should be apparent.

2. Gibbon displays a similar attitude in his comments on the novels of John Buchan: 'when his characters talk Scots they do it in suitable inverted commas, and such

characters as do talk Scots are always the simple, the proletarian, the slightly ludicrous.' (Gibbon and MacDiarmid 1934:201)

3. Though if we examine the narrative prose of Kelman's other novel, *A Chancer* (written consistently in this "first style"), we will find that non-standard usages are evident even in this almost dehydrated form of the language, e.g.:'He was limping slightly when he arrived in the lounge bar that evening. Rab and Rena and Betty were sitting waiting on him.'(90).

4. *Roofsliding* in *Not not while the Giro* extends this idea to story length.

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A PRAGMATICS OF VERBAL IRONY IN LITERARY DISCOURSE: AN EXAMPLE FROM DRAMA

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Abstract

This paper starts from the premise that Sperber and Wilson's account of verbal irony is adequate and generalisable. It can be successfully extended to account for verbal irony in literary discourse by paying particular attention to the questions of attribution, recontextualisation and attitude communication. The paper further argues that pragmatics of verbal irony should, however, combine this account with a consideration of the functions or effects for which this phenomenon is used in discourse. It is suggested here that this can be achieved through a treatment of sociolinguistic and psychological issues like politeness, solidarity and power particularly in relation to the manipulative function of irony. These points are illustrated through the analysis of Mark Antony's speech in Julius Caesar, where he gradually builds irony up and uses it effectively in order to turn the originally resentful crowds into allies fighting against Brutus.

1. Introduction

An interesting struggle for power between voices can be observed in the communication of irony. The marginalisation of others by inscribing on their words one's own perspective is one of the main features of irony. A voice can be transformed and superseded when embedded in the new context as presented or created by the ironist. The utterance and its actual or possible originator can be consequently ridiculed and/or undermined as a result of this process of recontextualisation. The supremacy of the ironist's voice is achieved at the expense of the evoked one which, because of its incongruity with and inappropriateness in the context in which it is used, becomes the source for negative comment on the opinion or utterance it represents.

Because it is an "art that gets its effects from below the surface," as Muecke (1969: 5) describes it, irony can easily frustrate attempts at its elucidation through an investigation of its syntactic and semantic representations alone since all sentences are considered to be potentially ironic (Furst 1985; Sperber and Wilson 1989). Irony proves to be a highly intricate and context-bound type of communication. A process of disambiguation becomes necessary in order to identify it. Moreover, the capacity of irony to communicate what is offensive in an apparently non-offensive manner, given its duplicitous nature, qualifies it as a successful "way of avoiding censorship" as Scholes (1982: 75) points out, "whether the censor is a politician or the superego." This covertness characteristic of the communication of irony grants its user a manipulative power particularly useful for persuasive endeavours where winning an addressee's support, or at least understanding, counts as a major step towards securing their conversion to the intended position. Recent research in the field of pragmatics by Sperber and Wilson has provided a definition of verbal irony that sheds new light on the mechanisms behind its generation and recognition within the confines of a wider

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pragmatic approach to communication.

This paper will first briefly review the pragmatic account Sperber and Wilson propose of verbal irony, described in their book *Relevance* (1986) and their papers published in 1981 and 1989. It will also maintain that this account can be successfully applied in dealing with the problems of generation and recognition of the usually more complex instances of irony encountered in long stretches of discourse, by putting particular emphasis on the questions of recontextualisation, attribution and attitude communication .

Second, developing from this perspective, it will be suggested that a pragmatics of irony needs to incorporate, besides an elucidation of its mechanisms, an investigation of the use and effect of irony as a manipulative strategy in discourse, influencing the power relations between the participants in the interaction, whether they are actually present or simply evoked. Hence, a consideration of a number of relevant psychological and sociolinguistic phenomena might prove essential to its analysis. Examining issues like politeness, power and solidarity, for instance, establishing the role of the self and the other, the ironist and the audience in a particular interaction where irony is involved, can help us achieve a more comprehensive pragmatics of irony.

In the final section, this position will be illustrated with an analysis of the familiar scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Scene ii, Act iii): Mark Antony takes advantage of the opportunity to mourn Caesar and turns his originally hostile audience into confederates in fighting Brutus and the Senators by using irony and therefore without having to utter a single explicitly offensive word against them.

2. Irony as echoic interpretation

Sperber and Wilson's account of human communication sees it as a cognitive inferential process. It assumes that it is the task of an addressee to select the right inference from any ostensive verbal or non-verbal stimulus addressed to them. (Ostensive behaviour is at work when a person attracts another person's attention in order to communicate his or her willingness to communicate something or, in Sperber and Wilson's terms "making manifest an intention to make something manifest" (1986: 49)). This selection will take place following the principle of relevance, which assumes that the speaker has chosen the formulation that requires least processing effort while conveying a satisfactory number of contextual effects. By addressing another person, a speaker seeks to modify their cognitive environment (which is the set of assumptions that the addressee holds). The modification of this cognitive environment results in a number of contextual effects corresponding to one of three alternatives:

1. strengthening an existing assumption
2. eliminating or contradicting an existing one
3. creating further contextual implications.

Hence, every time someone is addressed, they will assume that the speaker has something worth their attention and processing effort, and unless an utterance is totally uninformative, it will be considered communicative and relevant.

This framework equally applies to the more demanding, less straightforward communication of irony, as the extra processing effort required from the hearer of an ironic utterance is "rewarded" by extra effects which are absent from more explicit non-ironic paraphrases of its propositional content. Sperber and Wilson consider verbal irony as implicitly communicating an attitude of disapproval, rejection or mockery and to belong to a class of utterances categorised as "echoic." According to them, an ironical utterance satisfies the principle of relevance to a large extent because of "the information it conveys about the attitude of the speaker to the opinion echoed" (1986: 239). They maintain that an ironical utterance "is one that echoes an actual or possible opinion of a certain person or type of person, in order to dissociate oneself from it or make fun of it" (Wilson and Sperber 1986: 30).

Before explaining what they mean by "echoic", it is first worth examining what they mean by "utterance." For Sperber and Wilson, "every utterance is an interpretive expression of a thought of the speaker" (1986: 231). Accordingly, every utterance can be used "descriptively" or "interpretively." When used descriptively, an utterance either describes a state of affairs in the actual world or a state of affairs that is desirable. When used interpretively, an utterance can be either an interpretation of some attributed thought or utterance or an interpretation of some thought which it is desirable to entertain in a certain way. Irony falls under the first type of the second category. That is, the thought of the speaker which is interpreted by the utterance is itself an interpretation of a thought of somebody other than the speaker, or of the speaker in the past. This type of utterance is considered a "second-degree interpretation" of someone else's thought and achieves relevance in two ways. First, as in the case of what is called "reported speech," the utterance is relevant because it informs the hearer of the fact that a certain person has said something or thinks something. Second, in other cases, relevance is achieved by informing the hearer of the fact that the speaker has in mind what a particular person said and has, besides, a certain attitude towards it. The speaker's interpretation of that person's thought is considered relevant in itself. Interpretations achieving relevance in this manner (that is, depending on others' utterances) are seen as "echoic" (1986: 238).

The problem arising concerning the assumed echoic nature of ironic utterances can be answered by the fact that these utterances need not interpret a thought that is attributable to a particular individual. What makes an utterance echoic is not its actual earlier enunciation - it can be echoic even when uttered for the first time. Sperber and Wilson explain that irony is mostly related, on the one hand, to the question of implicit attribution, and the communication of dissociative attitude, on the other. They suggest that the

> thought being echoed may not have been expressed in an utterance; it might not be attributable to any specific person, but merely a type of person or people in general; it may be a cultural inspiration or a norm.
>
> (Sperber and Wilson 1989: 102)

and add that

> the speaker echoes an implicitly attributable opinion, while simultaneously dissociating herself from it. What differs from case to case are the reasons for the dissociation.
>
> (Sperber and Wilson 1989: 102)

Hymes (1987) also discusses this problematic point in this definition of irony and tries to explain it by saying that irony

> when intended may not be echoic in a sense that implies a previous or standard use. An ironic remark may be novel. The ingredient of "echoic" mention may be an implicit comparison of perspectives, a comparison of a present situation to another possibility in which what is said might be said, a possibility perhaps in the future.
>
> (Hymes 1987: 299-300)

The echoic element is thus related to the question of re-attribution of opinions or utterances rather than to actual previous pronounciation of them. What matters is that they are treated as such, i.e., as having been uttered previously by the speaker, and that they are used in order to indicate that speaker's distance from them.

2.1. Recognition of irony

Because of its characteristic covertness and implicitness, verbal irony is more liable to misfire than other more explicit types of communication. The involvement of attitude expression through the implicit echoing of opinions is what might jeopardise its correct interpretation.

Besides, it is an extremely context bound phenomenon that involves norms and values whose evaluation and judgement is often relative and problematic. What makes a tidy place, for instance, is not always well-defined and clear-cut: what might be disorderly for one person can be tidy for another. For two people sharing an approximately common standard of tidiness, an utterance like "What a tidy place" said about a place with a floor covered with papers, cups and bottles, unmade beds etc. can be easily perceived as ironic because of the clear incongruity between the state of the place and the standard of evaluation used to describe it (assuming of course that the shared standard is at odds with the state of the room). The speaker here is using the utterance "borrowed" from another context in which the room or rooms are tidy - with reference to a common cultural norm or expectation about criteria for tidiness - in order to comment on the absence of that standard in the situation he or she is describing. The utterance is called upon in order to ridicule the present situation and comment negatively on it.

While irony can be recovered automatically, it might need more negotiation of meaning between the participants in the interaction before it is recovered. The risk is that what might be used as a second-degree interpretation utterance by the speaker can be mistaken for a mere description because the hearer happens to adhere to that particular point of view. This, in turn, would prove that the participants do not share a common frame of reference or a comparable assessment of the situation, against which the irony can be successfully communicated. The result is a failure on the part of the speaker to modify the hearer's cognitive environment in the intended manner. Furthermore, because the failure of the hearer to recognise irony classifies him or her among its victims (Muecke 1969: 35), these cases might be identified as complete breakdowns of communication. When this misunderstanding is intended by the speaker, however, it might be performing a different function in the discourse. It might, for instance, be working as a rhetorical strategy used to achieve further effects in the discourse, as will

be demonstrated in the analysis of the scene from *Julius Caesar* presented below.

The recognition of irony, according to Sperber and Wilson, requires two steps. First, it is essential to be aware of the fact that the opinion presented is an echo and is therefore not attributable to the speaker. It is thus possible to proceed and possibly identify the origin of that echo. Second, it is equally essential to assume that the speaker is using the utterance in order to dissociate himself or herself from its content and/or to make fun of it. Three factors have, moreover, to interact in order for a hearer to reach the effects of irony that reward the extra processing effort spent in its interpretation. Sperber and Wilson say that

> recognition of irony and what it communicates, depends on an interaction between the linguistic form of an utterance, the shared cognitive environment of communicator and audience, and the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance.
>
> (Sperber and Wilson 1989: 116)

Hence, the hearer has to realise that the speaker is saying something "about the utterance" and not "by means of it" and has simultaneouly to look for clues in the context that can signal to him or her that the utterance is "false, inappropriate, or irrelevant" if taken at face value (Sperber and Wilson, 1981) before catching the ironic communication.

The functioning of these points can be illustrated with reference to the famous opening sentence from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* :

> It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune is in want of a wife.

While reading it, as in all communication, a reader will be unconsciously trying to resolve the question of attribution, in other words trying to answer the question "Whose opinion is this?" or "Who says so?"

The reader might first consider the descriptive interpretation where the utterance is taken as an assertion by Jane Austen or her narrator:

> "It is a truth universally acknowledged ..., I believe."

This hypothesis, however, is rejectable as inconsistent with the principle of relevance in at least two ways. First, we might raise reservations about the adequacy of the claim that it is making so strongly ("truth universally acknowledged"), since there are likely to be at least a few cases where the statement can be questioned. Second, it is contradicted both by the information provided subsequently and by the background facts that might be available to the reader about the ironic nature of Jane Austen's writing.

A second possible interpretation is that the utterance is used interpretively, that is, as implicitly echoing what the neighbours of the single young man are thinking or rather plotting for. The narrator in this case is using the utterance to comment ironically on the behaviour of this community. She is indirectly making fun of their corrupt values and stressing their patronising opportunistic conduct: the neighbours assume things about the

man and start organising his life for him and preparing to introduce him to their daughters.

Further contextual implications can be achieved by adding layers of irony to the situation described. It is clear for instance that this utterance is echoic in a more obvious sense since it is also a parody of a typical opening of the Gothic novel. This, in turn, leads to the generation of further implicatures about the knowledge of the narrator (author) and her sensitivity to literary conventions and techniques, her critical view of them, what expectations she wants to raise in her reader, etc. Her echoing of this feature gives her voice authority over it as she shows her awareness of its existence, on the one hand, and her willingness, on the other, to ridicule it by embedding it in her own discourse, in a context that falsifies it, although only retrospectively, once further reading has taken place. Despite the fact that the attribution is general and vague - to a particular genre of literary writing - the effect is as rewarding as the implicit attribution of the opinion to the neighbours of the young man. Further processing effort can certainly be justified in the interpretation of this utterance. A large number of weaker implicatures can be potentially obtained from the simple device of intentionally leaving implicit the attribution of the echo evoked.

3. Irony and psycho-sociolinguistic considerations

The investigation of the pragmatics of irony does not only involve providing an account that identifies the purely linguistic mechanisms governing its commumication. A consideration of its use and effect as an interpersonal discourse strategy is equally essential in order to provide a more satisfactory grasp of its place in linguistic communication. For this purpose, some relevant psychological and sociolinguistic considerations relating to irony will be dealt with in the present section.

It is curious that the functioning of irony, a form of (albeit implicitly) offensive behaviour, should be warranted by its very opposite: politeness. While constituting a (strong) form of aggression, irony proves, paradoxically, to be the protegée of politeness as studied by Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and Lakoff (1973): an exaggerated emphasis on politeness can be just as marked as an absence of politeness. It can work as a signal for the creation of distance between the participants in a particular interaction as in the case of irony. Irony, which thrives on the affected pretence of formal politeness, the pretence that gives irony its social licence, can be used effectively for rhetorical functions. An ironist is usually overtly polite while being covertly rude and nasty. As the moral satires of Defoe and Swift, for instance, demonstrate, irony is a powerful manipulative tool of social criticism. While avoiding making an audience feel attacked and ready to be on the defensive, an ironist can discuss controversial issues and lead the audience to accept his or her undeclared goals. An ironist can thus make the interlocutors adopt his or her perspective indirectly, without offending them or seeming to force them into accepting it. This "associative" or "inclusive" effect discussed in Kaufer (1977, 1981) and Myers (1977) respectively, can also save the audience embarrassment or humiliation where its members turn out to be supporters of the undermined target of irony. Since they are not directly addressed, the members of an audience have the opportunity to change their minds secretly and join the "higher" position of the ironist by understanding if not agreeing with the irony. As Booth (1974: 41) points out, an audience is more likely to feel that the meaning is theirs and therefore

become more ready to adopt it, if they reach it using their own mental capacities.

This sense of camaraderie and solidarity between the ironist and the audience may of course function merely at a superficial level where the only indication of its existence would be the actual act of understanding that ensues from deciphering the covert message ironically communicated. It is in fact often disrupted in instances where the audience understands but does not agree with the irony, as in the case of a sexist or a racist joke, for instance. The inclusive or associative function of irony can still be at work, although at its minimum, as a result of understanding, i.e., in understanding without agreement. It is at work in the sense that we would perceive the intended target of an ironic racist or sexist joke or remark but there might be no "drawing together" with the ironist. In fact, the opposite might happen. The associative, inclusive function of irony can be considered in operation if only because it reveals common, shared grounds between the ironist and the audience.

This function, as Kaufer (1977) points out, is usually maintained through the development of a parallel "dissociative" (or "exclusive" Myers, 1977) function which involves the group or person, usually absent from the interaction situation, against whom the irony is directed. The drawing together of the ironist and the audience is usually achieved by means of this simultaneous separative movement that polarises them from the third element or the object of irony. This "audience bifurcation" as Kaufer (1977) calls it, seems to be a common outcome of the communication of irony.

Victimising one's audience is not unusual either, given the threat that an open confrontation might represent. Mark Antony's funeral oration falls into this category since the audience he addresses has been convinced by Brutus' speech of the noble motives behind the killing of Caesar and of Brutus' own nobility and devotion to Rome. Besides, Mark Antony is only granted permission to talk on the condition that he says nothing bad about Brutus and the other senators. He therefore chooses the track of irony to make his point and convert the audience from enemies to real allies thirsty for revenge.

4. Irony as a manipulative tool

It is worth noting that Mark Antony has a second audience of course, the theatre audience, and that his own discourse is embedded in that of the playwright who makes him behave and speak in a particular manner. To this second audience, knowledge of Antony's intentions and of other events in the play is available. Hence, the verbal irony generated in this scene is combined with a Dramatic Irony resulting from the ignorance of Antony's addressees, the citizens of Rome, that they are subject to manipulation. They will have to wait almost until the end of the speech to perceive the irony and substitute it with its offensive propositional paraphrase which Mark Antony still refrains from uttering. This verbal transformation marks a transformation in the audience's attitude and signals Antony's success in reaching his goal.

Analysing this scene, we discern various persuasive strategies that are at work: the appeal to the Roman's and/or theatre audience's emotions, information management, claims to ignorance of rhetorical knowledge (in comparison to Brutus'), telling the audience what to think while, at the same time, denying doing it, etc. (cf Hawthorn's article in Hawthorn 1987). Irony is one major persuasive strategy manifested in the way Antony manipulates the contextual implications of the key utterance "Brutus is an

honourable man" to invert its meaning. His "goal", in de Beaugrande and Dressler's terms (1981), is the alienation of his (encoded) audience from its original point of view and its affiliation to the contradictory stance that will lead it to support him. In order to reach his goal, he relies mainly on recontextualisation as a discourse strategy and on play with politeness and social rules. Mark Antony, thus, continues to recontextualise the utterance "Brutus is an honourable man" as the speech proceeds, leading the audience ultimately to perceive it as ironical on the seventh mention and reject it of their own accord. They shout back at him "They were traitors. Honourable men!" Mark Antony first distinguishes between two attributable utterances and links them throughout his speech: "Brutus is an honourable man" his audience thinks, and "Caesar was ambitious" says Brutus. The discrimination in originators between them conditions the means he uses in reaching his goal. In the first utterance, "Brutus is an honourable man," the opinion is attributable to the audience. Hence, he cannot challenge it openly or directly. Instead, he tries to put it into question indirectly through linking it to the second utterance, which he openly attributes to Brutus: "Brutus says that Caesar was ambitious." The plan is that, by questioning Brutus' words about Caesar, Mark Antony might lead the people to change their mind about his qualities, which they have so far taken for granted.

Thus, Mark Antony starts his speech with a reference to Brutus through a presupposition ("the honourable Brutus") that his audience takes at face value since they subscribe to its truth. Leech's (1983) Approbation and Agreement maxims (two of the maxims of the Politeness Principle he assumes to govern communication) are strictly observed here leading the members of the stage audience to feel confident about their addresser. They are also led to assume, wrongly and naively, that he is on their side (confirming to the theatre audience the opinion expressed earlier in the play about the mindlessness of crowds and their flexibility, which, of course, Mark Antony is fully aware of and is skillfully exploiting). The echoic, ironic nature of the utterance does not escape the theatre audience or the readers, however. They are aware, on the one hand, that Mark Antony's addressees are the implicitly echoed originators of the opinion and that Antony is in total disagreement with that opinion, on the other.

Mark Antony's audience thus mistake his cunning, compromising utterance for a genuine assertion while he does nothing to make them perceive their mistake. On the contrary, he takes advantage of it. As described in Wilson and Sperber, misunderstandings arise from a failure on the part of the speaker "to notice and hence to eliminate, an interpretation that was both accessible enough to the hearer and productive enough in terms of contextual implications to be accepted without question" (1986: 22). The misunderstanding in this case is intentionally caused by Mark Antony. His utterance strengthens for the people an already existing assumption about Brutus, and at the same time, fulfills further contextual implications like leading them to believe that the still unwelcome Antony is on their side.

The strategy with which he chooses to undermine the presupposition "the honourable Brutus" involves establishing a kind of logical relationship between the honour of Brutus and Caesar's ambition: Caesar is ambitious because the honourable Brutus says so. Thus, while undermining the first proposition (Caesar is ambitious) by challenging its truth, he feigns to undertake to preserve the other (Brutus is an honourable man). He continuously recontextualises it and juxtaposes it with the first and therefore leads the audience to re-evaluate it as well. He develops for this purpose several contexts that

highlight various qualities of Caesar's which contradict the claim of his corruption and ambition. He portrays him respectively as the faithful friend, the mighty and glorious warrior, the good patriot, the humane and compassionate man, and the humble leader. At the same time, Antony indirectly questions Brutus' honour by encouraging the people to retrieve the implicature that he is of the same class as Cassius and the others by claiming that they are "all honourable men." As Mark Antony cleverly pauses to let them discuss the matter among themselves, it becomes clear to the theatre audience that the encoded audience (his addressees) have changed their minds about him. Now, "There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony." Two more mentions of Brutus' honour, sandwiched between suggestions of mutiny and moral bribery, finally convince the audience of the falsity and inappropriateness of the utterance. It brings them to reject their former position through recognising the way it is ironised in Antony's discourse. This recognition also marks the final change of camp: the audience consolidates its allegiance to Caesar and therefore to Mark Antony and declares rebellion against Brutus and the others.

This scene shows the process, in slow motion as it were, by which ironical utterances can be created through a process of recontextualisation and re-attribution. What is first perceived as a descriptive use of the utterance is transformed into an echoic interpretation, except that in this case the audience fails to trace the origin of the utterance back to itself and therefore fails to realise that it has been victimised in the first place. Its final dissociation from and rejection of the criticised position is successfully accompanied by an association and a closing of ranks with their victimiser. The indirectness and covertness characteristic of irony is what allows this complete turn in the audience's attitude to occur and guarantees the safety of the orator. Keeping up the mask of politeness: making the audience feel trusting and confident, avoiding open slander or confrontation till the end; and observing the socially valued rules of keeping one's word, respecting one's promise, and adhering to the conditions for his speech; doing his duty as a friend of Caesar and a loyal Roman (praising the dead man); and addressing his encoded audience respectfully ("Friends, Romans, countrymen"), are the main components that bring about the success of Antony in reaching his goal without open aggression.

5. Conclusion

This paper puts forward the argument that irony is a powerful tool for audience manipulation and attitude modification in discourse. The questions of politeness, association and victimisation discussed above between participants in ironic communication, also characterise relations between authors and readers. They are as relevant to the opinions and actions of the inhabitants of the fictional narrative world as they are to individuals in simpler one-to-one interactions. For instance, the opening sentence from *Pride and Prejudice* discussed above establishes the tone of the narrative and provides the encoded reader with clues for interpretation. It, in fact, indicates the ironic undermining attitude to be detected and followed in interpretation. The same mechanisms governing irony production, recognition and pragmatic effects in simpler discourse situations can, it might be argued, be used by writers to manipulate the readers' attitudes towards and therefore their degree of proximity to the characters, and events in a given narrative.

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS' REACTIONS TO LEARNER TRAINING FOR SELF-ACCESS LISTENING

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Abstract

Learner training (LT) is felt to be important for students to make effective use of self-access facilities, yet there is uncertainty about how it should be done and how it will be received. This study examined students' reactions to two versions of LT for listening, finding little negative reaction, but many useful comments on content, manner and timing of LT, as well as the kind of listening material they wanted; it also examined students' current use of self-access listening, and what governed their choices. It revealed that classroom-based LT had some good effect, but that a more consistent approach was necessary.

1. Background

The present study arose out of our interest in making self-access facilities more effective. At the Institute for Applied Language Studies we run a year-round full-time General English programme, the students being 50-80 in number, mainly European and Japanese, mainly in their twenties. There is one timetabled self-access session per week in addition to out-of-class hours when students may freely use our Self-Access Centre.

A study carried out last year into how students used the timetable "Self-Access Session" (Davies, Dwyer, Heller and Lawrence 1991) revealed that lower level classes (elementary to intermediate) tended to use the listening resources more than other resources and more than higher levels. Following that study our concern was to develop listening resources in general, with particular attention to our provision at lower levels. Before attempting this it seemed necessary to answer three questions:

1. What do learners do with listening materials?
2. How can we develop the range of materials?
3. How can we help inefficient listeners improve?

The first question is to some extent answered in the first stage of the present study; the second became the subject of a separate study.

The third, however, was more complicated. One obvious answer appeared to be some form of learner training, with the intention of raising students' awareness of the process of listening in L1 and L2, and of suggesting strategies which might prove helpful. Yet we felt ambivalent towards the concept of learner training, finding it possibly patronising, and fearing that students might feel likewise. We felt it would be impossible to measure the effect of such training, since any measurable improvement in performance might be attributed to exposure through the English-speaking environment

(including the classroom) or other factors affecting individuals; it would, however, be possible to obtain a cross-section of students' reactions to such training, and establish whether any of them did react negatively, and whether they themselves claimed that it changed their behaviour and contributed to improved listening performance.

The aims of the present study were, therefore:

1. to find out how learners claimed they selected and used self-access listening materials;

2. to gauge learners' affective reactions to learner-training;

3. to discover whether and in what ways learners believed our learner training materials had influenced their approach to listening.

2. Review of literature

In order to place this study in the context of current theory and practice, it is necessary to refer to three bodies of literature: that on learner strategies, since primarily that is what we aimed to teach; that on learner training for self-directed learning (i.e. training learners to take responsibility for decisions affecting their language learning and, to an extent, for autonomy); and that on the process of listening in a foreign language.

As regards the literature on general learner strategies (see Rubin 1987 for the historical background), research at first focused on identifying and classifying the strategies adopted by good learners (see for example O'Malley, Russo, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares and Kupper 1983). Brown and Palinscar (1982) made a useful contrast between metacognitive (knowledge and regulation of learning) and cognitive (manipulation of learning materials to improve performance and enhance learning) as well as socio-affective strategies. This classification has been widely adopted in the second wave of research, which is testing the assumption that learners can usefully be trained to adopt good strategies (e.g. O'Malley 1987). As regards the effect of strategies on listening in particular, O'Malley (1987: 141-2) found that a combined programme of matacognitive and cognitive strategy training helped to a certain extent, depending on the difficulty of the task, and on the length of time devoted to training. However, he was looking at the effect of two strategies only; a broader choice of strategies might have shown different results.

In the literature concerning learner autonomy and self-directed learning, it has been generally accepted that learner training is necessary, both psychological and methodological (Holec 1980, Dickinson 1987, 1988). However, Sheerin (1989: 34) suggests that the term "learner training" be applied to the teaching of practical skills, while helping students to a deeper understanding of learning and of their own style be termed "learner development". She further suggests (Sheerin 1991) that practical learner training may lead learners indirectly to change their psychological standpoint. This latter approach we adopted as more respectful of learners' individual learning styles and less time-consuming that Holec's "deconditioning" and "reconstruction" process (Holec 1987).

Turning to the literature on listening comprehension, the general current view of the process of listening is perhaps most clearly expressed by Anderson and Lynch (1988:

13), who argue for "the listener as active model-builder", showing how the listener draws on schematic, contextual and systemic knowledge to help make sense of the acoustic signals. As Wenden (1987: 160) points out, many current listening materials contain exercises aimed at developing this skill, but fail to identify it explicitly as a generalisable set of strategies. The value of telling learners the reason for what you are doing - "informed" as opposed to "blind" learner training (Wenden 1987: 159) - is fairly well established, and has been called for in the teaching of listening (Rixon 1986; Underwood 1989). While teachers at the Institute report that they habitually explain the rationale of exercises to students, it seemed appropriate to standardise this information in our learner training materials.

3. Methods and materials

The study was divided into three stages:

1. First interview: student's background and present use of self-access listening. (See Appendix.)
2. Student's examination of the Learner Training Materials.[1]
3. Second interview: student's reaction to materials.

3.1 First interview

The purpose of this interview was to have background information on the students, in case any correlation should emerge between attitude to LT on the one hand, and learner characteristics on the other.

It was also intended to investigate what use was made of Self-Access Centre's listening materials, as a follow-up to the investigation mentioned above (Davies et al, 1991). In that, student activity in the Self-Access Centre was noted as "listening" as opposed to "reading" etc; now we wanted to discover in more detail what they did and why.

3.2 Description of materials

Learner Training: *Introduction to Listening*, Versions A and B.

Annotated guide to books and cassettes available at intermediate level: *Guide to Intermediate Listening Materials.*

Versions A and B contain basically the same information in the first four pages of each. A is written in question and answer form, and so might be seen as more linear in approach. Questions on the first page are designed to heighten learner awareness of the process of listening in their own language and of the role of background knowledge, expectations/predictions and purpose. The second page suggests ways of improving listening outside (socio-effective and metacognitive strategies), while the third page addresses those who feel a particular need to work on listening in the study room. It asks them to identify their own problems from a list of seven. It asks the students to consider what kinds of exercise might help these problems, and on the fourth page it

gives some strategies. Finally there is a short guide to intermediate materials at the end of A.

Version B is more schematic and more detailed: it might also be seen as more directive, since it does not ask many question. It asks students if they recognise any of 12 problems listed on the first page and points out that they are common and can be overcome. On the second, third and fourth pages, seven strategies are suggested for developing one's listening ability. Pages 5 and 6 give general guidelines for work in the Study Room, while pages 7, 8, 9 and 10 are based on Sheerin's *Self-Access* (1989: 83-87), which offers clear guidelines to students on how to manipulate materials to suit their own needs - cognitive strategies which they could use both at the Institute and afterwards on returning home, as autonomous learners.

3.3 Second interview

There was no set form for this for two reasons: firstly, the variety in level and interests of the students; secondly, the restrictive nature of a set format - we hoped by using an exploratory mode to elicit a wide range of opinions, and thereby discover what to focus on.

Areas covered in the interview:

1. General reaction to LT materials.
2. Timing - when should LT be given in a course?
3. Presentation - did they like the look of the materials?
4. Changed behaviour - did the students do anything differently now as a result of reading the materials?
5. Which did they prefer, Versions A or B, and why?
6. Was the materials Guide (annotated catalogue of listening materials at intermediate level) clear and informative?
7. Any other recommendations regarding listening materials, or the Self-Access Centre in general?

3.4 Description of sample

The smaller number of students in the second interview was simply a result of lack of time; however 15 was the target for the complete study, and the extra 9 students participating in stage 1 are a useful bonus for the extra dimensions to the study related in 3.1.

Students Participating in the First Interview

Total:	24	
Level:	6 Pre-Intermediate	(German, Thai, Saudi, Hungarian, Japanese, Spanish)
	9 Intermediate	(5 Japanese, 3 Italian, Chinese)
	7 Upper-Intermediate	(3 Japanese, 2 Saudi, Italian, Spanish)
	1 Advanced	(Spanish)

Students Participating in the Second Interview

Total:	15	
Level:	3 Pre-Intermediate	(Japanese, Spanish, Saudi)
	6 Intermediate	(4 Japanese, Italian, Chinese)
	4 Upper Intermediate	(2 Japanese, Saudi, Spanish)
	1 Advanced	(Spanish)

4. Discussion of results

The limited numbers mean that the data can only be viewed as qualitative, not quantitative; moreover, since the interviewers were known to the subjects, positive comments are discounted as being possibly pure courtesy, except where backed up with a specific reason.

4.1 First interview: use of the study room listening materials

Only two interviewees used the self-access listening facilities on a daily basis; the rest were evenly divided among twice-weekly, weekly and occasional users. This is the pattern we would expect in an English speaking environment, where even lower level students can generally find more interesting and useful exposure outside the Institute: the role of the Self-Access Centre for listening is to provide more easily accessible listening material which can be studied intensively.

Choice of materials depended primarily on title and apparent interest-value, than on what learners perceived as meeting their needs (e.g. social, functional exchanges), and occasionally on teachers' recommendations. Choice of unit seemed more likely to depend on chance - students would start at the beginning, or wherever the tape happened to be. This suggests that in extending the range of materials our first consideration should be to provide a wide variety of topics judged likely to satisfy the range of interests most typically displayed by our students, and that some teacher-led practice in using an index to select units for particular reasons, and then locating these on the tape (counter numbers per unit are given but are never failsafe) would be a useful part of learner training.

As for the selection and use of exercises, approaches varied from those who started at the beginning and worked through, following instructions, those who listened and merely thought about the exercises, those who just listened, sometimes using the transcript, to those who listened to note useful language, with the majority following instructions and doing the exercises given. This is reassuring to an extent, in that we had suspected that many might spend all their time just listening, or just listening and following the tapescript, and not varying their approach. At least the use of published exercises ensures some variety in activity, and some purpose to listening, and some students were using their own initiative in deciding how to use materials.

By far the most important feature of a listening exercise was felt to be an interesting topic. Usefulness and challenge were two further desirables, followed by ease.

Finally, the learners were asked what "special tricks" they used to help them: the use of repetition and dictation were mentioned several times, whereas strategies available in everyday life, such as listening to children, paying attention to context and body language, were mentioned only by a few individuals. Here, answers were affected by how interviewees interpreted the question, which was left open, including both study room listening and real-life. Had they been given a list of strategies to tick, they might have identified many as their usual practice; nevertheless it is interesting to note what they chose to highlight.

4.2 Second interview

4.2.1 Changed behaviour and reaction to materials

The timing of the project, with most students being interviewed for the second time in the second half of term, meant that we were unlikely to find students changing their behaviour as a result of reading the LT notes they were interviewed on, and indeed the majority said they would probably not do anything differently as a result of reading these notes. Six students said they had learnt nothing new from these materials, but four of these felt they were worth reading as reinforcement and reminders, more detailed than the training received in class: two stated that although they had tried all these things before, they would now do so more consciously, feeling justified in knowing what they were doing and why. One also mentioned that it made her more aware of what was involved in L1 listening - "you listen to the ideas, not the words".

Four students said they had already changed their behaviour: three as a result of being in Scotland and two as a result of teachers' advice. Our observation suggests that several more had also changed, even if they had not recognised it, probably for the same two reasons, the former being more important. The main change mentioned was a shift in focus from word-for-word comprehension to getting the message, with a corresponding change from total panic or confusion to relaxing and following the gist.

The only strategies commented on as new were the materials based on Sheerin (1989), in particular the ways suggested of using a tapescript. Five students said they had changed the way they used tapescripts as a result of reading this: one said she would not have thought of using tapescripts and reactive listening without reading this, another commented that a procedure he had adopted from this was also used in class, but he had not thought before of generalising classroom procedure to self-access work.

The weakest student interviewed commented that although he felt the strategies would be useful, his greatest need was to build up basic vocabulary, and that only then would he be able to benefit by this advice. This concurs with O'Malley's (1987) finding that where the level is too difficult, strategies may not help.

Explicit criticism of content was confined to one student disagreeing with certain strategies he did not find useful, such as listening to the television. He made the point that certain strategies "did not suit his character". Implicit criticism might be read into those interviews where the students said they felt the materials were useful, or helpful, but did not state why, and gave the impression that they did not feel personally affected or involved.

One student who reacted very positively to the materials was an extremely quiet and withdrawn young Japanese who had never shown such animation before: he found this type of approach far more useful than classroom LT, and, like another student, suggested similar LT for every skill and language area. He was perhaps the most marked example of a tendency we noticed, that the most positive reactions came from the quietest students, perhaps those who felt too shy to speak up and ask questions in class. Another student commented that she found it very comforting to read that problems which she had thought were hers alone were both common and surmountable. This confirms our impression that not only do the weakest students need this kind of attention, but they appreciate it and would like more.

4.2.2 Timing and presentation

Five said LT would be better given at the beginning of term, although two also agreed that it would perhaps make more sense after the student had some experience of listening and difficulties, and would be able to identify better with what is written. The fact that many interviewees had difficulty finding time to read the materials, and were doing it only because they had been asked to in the context of this project, suggests that the initial LT should be done partly in class.

All students commented favourably on the use of pictures and white space: the pictures made the LT more relaxing to read, less formidable, funnier, and easier to understand (in general they were intended to support the meaning of the text). As regards wording, one student made very strong criticism of those sections using "crew-only" language (although the words he identified as jargon raised no comment from other students, who may have found other sections difficult; another argument for initial handling in class). His was perhaps the most interesting interview, in that being older and used to a position of power, he was prepared to be analytical and forthright. He began by attacking the whole project roundly for its confusing presentation, but ended up making very detailed and constructive remarks. He commented on the difficulty of writing guidelines, striking a happy medium between being exhaustive and being concise and clear, and found the Sheerin materials the best example of this.

4.2.3 Comparison of versions A and B of LT materials

There had been no conscious attempt to make the language in one easier than the other, but the students' general perception was that A was easier and B more detailed, with the weaker students preferring A and the upper levels B. Two students gave no explanation

for their preference. It may be that the inductive question-answer approach combined with a lower information load in A is better suited to lower levels - two of the more advanced students found A "too easy" - and that the upper level students are better able to cope with a higher information load, for example the range of cognitive strategies suggested in Sheerin (1989).

It was generally agreed that help was needed in finding appropriate materials, but that the format used was not helpful: a grid indicating features of materials and a task sheet leading students to sample a variety from their level would be more useful.

5. Conclusions

The results showed that our fear of students objecting to and feeling patronised by LT was unfounded, at least as far as our sample went: we deliberately included three students considered most likely to object, being European, sophisticated speakers of two or more other languages, who as successful communicators probably already used many of the strategies suggested. At the same time, a number of students found it helpful for one or more of the following reasons: it confirmed their intuitions and reassured them about what they were doing; it reminded them of things they tended to forget; it reassured them that their problems were not unique; it suggested strategies or techniques they had not thought of. This suggests that LT is worth instituting in a more regular and consistent fashion.

As regards timing, it should be started at or near the beginning of a course, with a classroom session followed up by a handout summarising the outcome of discussion. The model we propose is a recording of extracts exemplifying a wide range of text types, accompanied by discussion questions aimed at raising awareness of the processes involved in L1 listening and how these can be transferred to L2 listening. Attention should however be paid to maintaining awareness of the connections between classroom work, study room work and listening in real life through classroom discussion, individual progress sheets, learner contracts and regular tutorials.

There are clearly also implications for extending the range and type of listening materials for self-access, the two types specifically mentioned by students in this study being authentic materials of intrinsic interest and specially prepared materials focusing on particular problems.

Within the limitations of our study, we have succeeded in reassuring ourselves as to the reactions of learners to LT, worked out a feasible model for implementing it and received indications as to the sorts of self-access materials students want and need. Research now needs to focus on low level learners with particular problems with listening, and on how learner training can be adapted to meet their particular needs. Further research would also be useful on the extent to which poor listeners who have failed to develop adequate listening strategies on their own actually adopt strategies suggested in LT, and how far this improves their performance. We have a long way to go before LT really helps those who need it most.

Note

1. Copies of these Learner Training Materials are available from the authors on request.

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Appendix: First Interview

1. Student details: name, age, sex, nationality/L1, occupation, length of stay.
2. Language learning background.
3. Use of English outside the classroom.
4. Motivation.
5. Attitude:
   - 5.1 When you listen, do you try to (a) understand every word or (b) try to pick up the message?
   - 5.2 If you can't do you (a) give up or (b) try to pick up something?
   - 5.3 What do you find difficult about listening?
6. Using the materials:
   - 6.1 How often do you use the study room?
   - 6.2 Which materials do you use?
   - 6.3 Why?
   - 6.4 How do you choose a unit to work on?
   - 6.5 Do you do all the exercises in a unit?
   - 6.6 If not, how do you choose?
   - 6.7 How do you decide what to do next?
   - 6.8 What is important to you in a listening exercise (interesting topic, usefulness, fun, challenge)?
   - 6.9 Afterwards, do you think about whether the listening exercise has been worthwhile?
   - 6.10 Do you have any special tricks to help you understand what you hear?

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